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#6
Adventures in Science Fiction
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SFX

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Stop-motion genius Ray Harryhausen in The SFX Interview

INTRODUCING THE SCI-FI CHANNEL:
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"I'VE NEVER BEEN A HERO": BABYLON 5'S JERRY DOYLE SPEAKS!

ROBERT RANKIN: SFX MEETS THE CLOWN PRINCE OF COMIC SF

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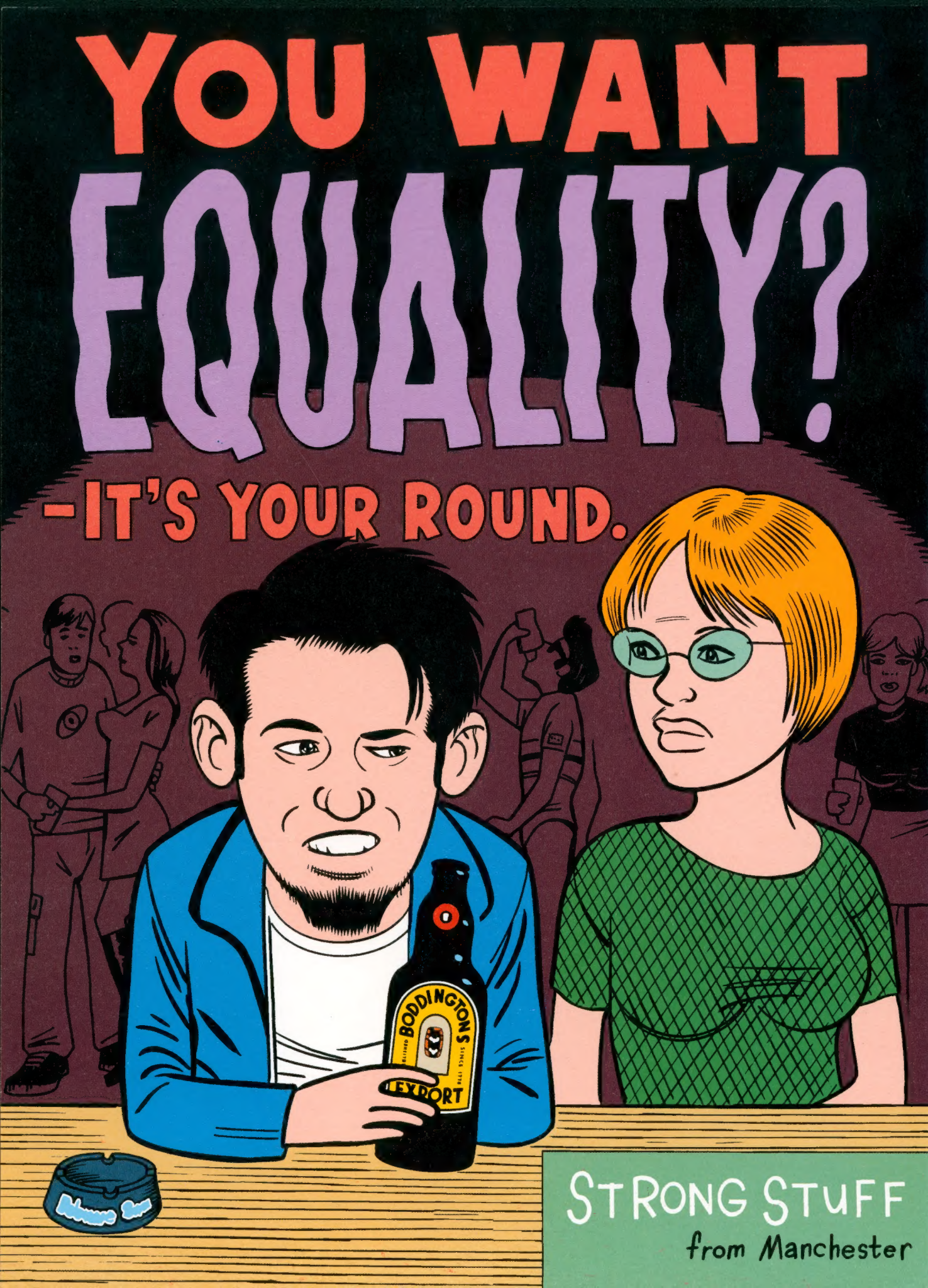
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Inside

SFX #6

Adventures in Science Fiction

NOVEMBER

Robert Rankin is a very funny man, as anyone who's read *The Antipope*, *The Greatest Show Off Earth*, *Armageddon the Musical*, or any of his other books would testify. He speaks to SFX on page 50...

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All the news that's fit to print, from the imminent launch of The Sci-Fi Channel to new Brit TV projects underway, plus an interview with the encyclopedic John Clute and *The Next Generation's* Lt Barclay, aka Dwight Schultz. Plus, of course, Production Hell.

Features

22 The SFX Interview: Ray Harryhausen
His name is synonymous with movie monsters. His films have thrilled kids and adults alike across four decades. In the "skeleton" and "Talos" scenes from *Jason and the Argonauts*, he created some of the most indelible images in films *ever*. He is, of course, the wizard of stop-motion animation, Mr Ray Harryhausen. As three of his classic movies earn video re-releases, courtesy of Warner Bros, **Dave Golder** went to meet the man himself...

42 Goldeneye: The Final Weeks
The latest James Bond film, even now being rushed for completion and a late November *première*, features the most stunning effects the series has ever seen, not to mention the last work by a certain Mr Derek Meddings. **Matt Bielby** spoke to the digital effects department of the Magic Camera Company as the final touches were made...

46 Jerry Doyle & Andrea Thompson
Babylon 5's are-they-or-aren't they? lovebirds, Jerry (Garibaldi) Doyle and Andrea (Talia Winters) Thompson, are, in real life, as together a couple as you could hope to meet. **Matt Bielby** caught up with them on a recent London stopover...

50 Robert Rankin
One of Britain's most popular humorous fantasy/SF authors, Robert Rankin talks sprouts, Brentford and supernatural entities holidaying in Britain with a bemused **MJ Simpson**.

56 40 Years of BBC Special Effects
After 40 years of notoriously making spaceships out of hairdriers and squeezy bottles – often, lest we forget, with remarkable results – the BBC Visual Effects department strikes back! By **Dave Golder**.

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Ian Hughes

STIRRING SCIENCE STORIES FROM ACROSS THE SF MULTIVERSE, FROM THE LONG-AWAITED ARRIVAL OF THE SCI-FI CHANNEL IN EUROPE TO AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN CLUTE, FROM A LOOK AT BRITAIN'S "OTHER" CONVENTION, NOVACON, TO THE FAMOUS THUNDERBIRDS PUPPETS SELL-OFF. PLUS ALL THE REGULARS...

This month in Strange Tales...

YELLOW!

As yellow-bellied as his uniform, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s Lt Barclay – aka actor Dwight Schultz – talks about his return in *Voyager* on **page 5.**

GREEN!

Japan's favourite monster is about to star in his 22nd (at our count) movie, and in this one he dies! Read all about Godzilla's last few days on **page 17.**

BLUE!

Hugo-nominated SF editor Ellen Datlow is best known for her decidedly saucy erotic horror anthologies. We talk to her about sex with aliens on **page 14.**

SFX Top Tens

The naysayers of this world claimed SFX would never last... They were wrong, of course, but considering none of these sadly missed British SF titles (all fiction-based, incidentally, not magazines *about* SF, like this one) ever made it to a second issue, you can easily understand their scepticism...

10. **SF Digest** (1976)
9. **Alien Worlds** (1966)
8. **Worlds of the Universe** (1953)
7. **Worlds at War** (1950)
6. **Cosmic Science Stories** (1950)
5. **Future Fantasy & Science Fiction** (1948)
4. **Thrilling Stories** (1946)
3. **Outlands** (1946)
2. **Weird Shorts** (1944)
1. **Weird Story Magazine** (1940)

Based on Roger Robinson's *SF & Fantasy Magazines 1923-1980* (Beccon Publications, 1993).

Blast off!

THE SCI-FI CHANNEL LAUNCHES IN THE UK

For SF fans it's the most eagerly awaited development in years – America's Sci-Fi Channel is about to begin broadcasting in Britain. From Wednesday 1 November, cable customers will be treated to a 24-hour diet of SF, with the highlights shown on a new satellite channel. **Dave Golder** discovers how the service has been adapted for the European market, while **Jon Abbott** scrutinises the schedules...

After years of speculation and rumour – fuelled more by the fact it was such an obvious idea than any concrete information – the owners of the acclaimed US Sci-Fi Channel are now about to bring us a European equivalent.

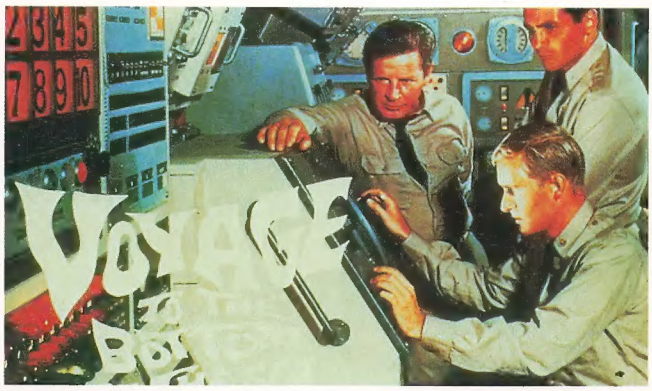
"We're launching the Sci-Fi Channel in Europe on 1 November," confirmed Rafael Pastor, managing director of Sci-Fi Channel's parent company, USA Networks International, to SFX.

In the UK, The Sci-Fi Channel has signed deals with all the major cable companies, making it available to 87% of subscribers from day one. "We're very proud of that – it makes us one of the most widely broadcast cable channels in this market," says Pastor. A deal has also been signed with BSkyB meaning it will be included in the new Sky Multi-Channels (SMC) package, which also launches on 1 November. The Sci-Fi Channel is expected to air from 7-10pm on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays on Sky.

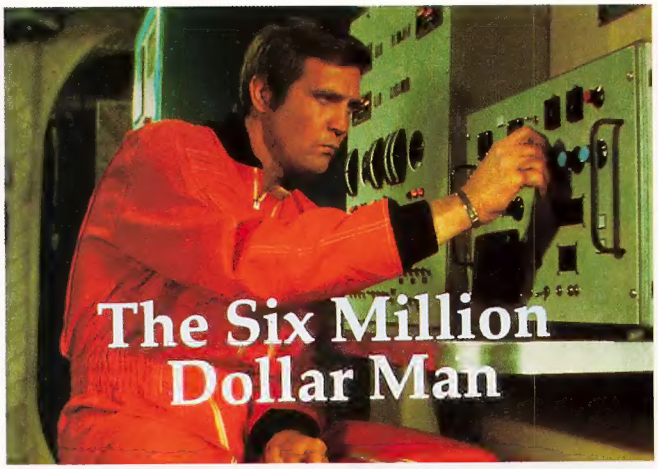
The Seaview crew typically overdoing it...

All this, of course, puts pressure on Sky, which, it's rumoured, was eager to launch its own SF channel called "Sky Fi." According to *Broadcast* magazine, Sky still intends to repackage its SF programmes under the Sky Fi name, although The Sci-Fi Channel is playing down any rivalry between the two operators. "We're working very happily together," claims Sci-Fi's VP of marketing (Europe), Michele Hickford, confirming that Pastor has already sent a letter to *Broadcast* denying any competition between the channels.

But to the important business: What will the European version of The Sci-Fi Channel look like? Apart from golden oldie TV shows and the original programme *Earth Scan* (see boxout, right), Pastor promises theme weekends, festivals, and a steady mix



Richard Basehart ran the supersub Seaview in 1964's *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*...



Lee Majors as Steve Austin, "a man barely alive," in *The Six Million Dollar Man*.

of blockbuster and cult films, as well as European version of the US magazine programme *Sci-Fi Buzz*. "We're already working on how we can have more movies produced specifically for us," says Pastor, "to be premièred on the network..."

He's keen to see the channel expand in other ways, too – with original TV series, for instance.

"It's probably going to happen later rather than sooner. Series are ironically more expensive to do than movies... They wouldn't necessarily be series in the traditional narrative sense though. We're already looking at piloting something like an on-air sci-fi shopping show, sci-fi quiz shows, sci-fi auctions... There are so many possibilities."

One big problem The Sci-Fi Channel Europe has come across is acquiring the rights to broadcast the more popular SF TV shows. As The Sci-Fi Channel's head programmer David Armstrong admits, "A lot of the rights to the most popular science fiction programmes are already sewn up." This means that, at launch at least, a lot of the obvious candidates for an SF channel will be missing. UK Gold has the rights to a lot of BBC SF, Bravo has snaffled up all the old ITC faves, and Sky's nabbed the new *Star Trek* series. The Sci-Fi Channel, however, isn't down-hearted.

"Clearly, a lot of the most familiar science fiction shows are already under licence, meaning we won't be able to show them," admits Pastor. "But we're trying to make sure that when things come off licence, they'll be made available to us – provided we can pay for them, of course!"

Although only a latter-day SF fan himself, Pastor has picked a true buff in head programmer David Armstrong, a man who used to organise cult film festivals in the US (one of which boasted the world première of *A Boy and His Dog*), and has the names of people like Joe Dante in his address book. Also frustrated by licensing problems, Armstrong is keen to hear what viewers would like to see.

There's one final problem, of course – the term "sci-fi." Don't Pastor and co realise that a lot of SF fans are going to have a problem with this so-called "derogatory" term? Pastor seems unaware of any controversy, but Armstrong is eager to defend the name. "We're not just aiming at SF fans, but a wider audience. And, let's face it, most of the stuff we'll be showing isn't hardcore SF anyway..."

Earth Scan Begins

THE SCI-FI CHANNEL EUROPE'S FIRST BIT OFORIGINAL PROGRAMMING HITS THE AIRWAVES...

One of the major innovations provided by The Sci-Fi Channel will be *Earth Scan*, a show which gives viewers the chance to reveal their own alien encounters. Essentially just a series of brief (40-60 seconds) segments, *Earth Scan* will be slotted into The Sci-Fi Channel between programmes, each featuring a short video made by a viewer who claims to have had such an experience.

Although the format is still very loose at the moment, *Earth Scan* producer Glynn Ryland told SFX, "We want to make sure it looks good and funky from the first minute it's on the air, but flexible enough to grow and develop. It's a programme that belongs to the public."

If you want to send in your video evidence of alien encounters, or you just want further information, write to: Earth Scan, PO Box 2195, London W1A 1US.

The Sci-Fi Channel Top 10

As head programmer David Armstrong admits, most of what The Sci-Fi Channel will be showing is definitely more "sci-fi" than "SF." That doesn't mean there isn't some good stuff on offer, however. Jon Abbott takes a closer look at the initial line-up...

1. The Invaders

Saturdays, 7pm; Sundays, midnight

Covert invasion by emotionless aliens who look "like us." Stylistically of the same school as *The Outer Limits*.

High points: Almost the entire first season; the theme tune (originally composed for *The Outer Limits* by Dominic Frontiere).

Low points: The back end of season two.

Useless info: The flying saucer matte from *The Invaders* turns up in the *Mork and Mindy* episode "Necroton"...

2. Kolchak: The Night Stalker

Sundays, 2pm and midnight

Darren McGaven as the world-weary, wise-guy reporter who uncovers supernatural stories (yes, it inspired *The X-Files*).

High points: Brilliant cast; exciting scripts (usually based on unoriginal concepts); sharp dialogue.

Low points: Expect to suspend your disbelief a lot...

Useless info: Kolchak premièred in the US with *Kojak* and *Kodiak*...

3. The Outer Limits

Weekdays, 1pm and 10pm

Do not adjust your set... Unless it's to tune in to this superb SF anthology series.

High points: Virtually every episode is a masterpiece of invention.

Low points: Serious budget cut in the second season results in poor effects.

Useless info: Series Godfather Joe Stefano wrote the *Star Trek:TNG* episode that killed off Tasha Yar.

4. Night Gallery

Weekdays, noon

Rod Serling's second supernatural anthology series (after *The Twilight Zone*).

High points: Some very good episodes.

Low points: Corny attempts at humour.

Useless info: One of the segments of the pilot was directed by Steven Spielberg.

5. Lost in Space

Weekdays, 5pm

Space Family Robinson. Spaceship called Jupiter Two. Robot called, um, Robot. Dr Zachary Smith. You know the one.

High points: The early episodes of season one; the scenes between Will, Dr Smith and the Robot.

Low points: Descends into camp.

Useless info: Props and monsters from *Lost in Space* frequently turned up in *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*.

6. Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea

Weekdays, 6pm

Irwin Allen's attempt at sub-aqua SF. Tacky and proud of it.

High points: Lots of fireworks and falling about, funny dialogue, stock footage...

Low points: Lots of fireworks and falling about, funny dialogue, stock footage...

Useless info: The first season episode, "Turn Back the Clock," is a virtual remake of producer Irwin Allen's *The Lost World* movie.

7. The Invisible Man

Sundays, 1pm

David McCallum in an increasingly silly update of HG Wells' novel.

High points: A good cast.

Low points: *That* mask...

Useless info: Steven Bochco (creator of *Hill Street Blues, LA Law and NYPD Blue*) wrote the pilot.

8. The Six Million Dollar Man

Weekdays, 11am

Astronaut Steve Austin is cybernetically reconstructed after an accident at a cost to the US Government of six million dollars. Waste of taxpayers' money, I say.

High points: A good pilot film.

Low points: Slow, stiff series, with wooden actors and ponderous plots.

Useless info: After the show was cancelled, audiences were stunned to discover Lee Majors could act in *The Fall Guy* and *Tour of Duty*.

9. The Bionic Woman

Weekdays, 10-11am

Sequel to *The Six Million Dollar Man*.

High points: Good photography; a slightly higher SF content.

Low points: The Fembots!

Useless info: Third season featured Max, the bionic (gulp) dog...

10. Misfits of Science

Saturdays, 6pm; Sundays, 10am

A critical and ratings failure, this 1985 NBC series about a team of superheroes is a comic book romp that revels in its comic book-ness.

High points: A sense of fun that can be refreshing when compared to some of po-faced superhero series of the '80s.

Low points: Super cheaply made.

Useless info: 7' 4" actor Kevin Peter Hall also found work as *The Predator*.

One of the few chances you'll get to see the cast of the ultra-rare *Misfits of Science*. And one of the few chances you'll get to see the Predator, Kevin Peter Hall, without a mask, too.

Barclay's Back!

When Dwight Schultz was invited to be a guest at this year's Sol III *Star Trek* convention, it was solely because of his recurring *Next Generation* role as Lieutenant Reg Barclay. But to many people he is still Murdoch – aka "that bonkers chap from *The A-Team.*" He remembers both roles with affection, as **MJ Simpson** discovered...

"It was a great four years," says Dwight Schultz, thinking back to his time on *The A-Team.* "It came at just the right time, and it changed my life. I wasn't typecast at all after the show was over – I went on to do things that had nothing to do with being a loony. But I loved doing it, as I love doing Barclay. They're fun characters."

Lieutenant (junior grade) Reginald "Reg" Barclay III – a chronically insecure junior officer who sought refuge from reality in the holodeck – was introduced to *The Next Generation* in the third season episode "Hollow Pursuits."

"It was just a one-time thing, and I never imagined I would have a recurring character," Schultz remembers. But, of course, he did. Barclay was so well received that in the end Schultz found himself returning four times. In "nth Degree" he became an alien-controlled superbeing; in "Realm of Fear" he overcame his fear of transporter beams; in "Ship in a Bottle" he accidentally revived the holodeck's self-aware character, Moriarty; and in "Genesis" he mutated into a spider-monster. Now he has returned as the first *TNG* character to appear in *Star Trek's* newest incarnation, *Voyager.*

(Left) Barclay gets cosy with a holodeck version of Deanna. (Below left) Taking tea with Geordi in "Ten Forward."

Sol III (in Blackpool in May) was Dwight's second *Trek* con as Guest of Honour, his first being in Mannheim, Germany last September.

"I hesitated going to conventions for a long time because there are so many regulars on the show. I couldn't believe anybody would want to see someone who's only been in four or five episodes. I thought I'd feel a bit awkward. But the people are very warm and friendly, and it's actually been quite wonderful."

A long-time fan of the original series, Schultz leapt at the chance to play a role in *The Next Generation* – "Meeting Gene Roddenberry on the set was *so* exciting" – and has been a fan of *Trek* for a long time.

"We used to get together and talk about *Star Trek* back in the '60s when it was first on," he remembers. "And when it was taken off we were so annoyed. I was one of the people who wrote a letter! Whenever someone takes such pains to connect social issues with scientific themes – as they did – you appreciate it.

"I even went to some of the original science fiction conventions, before the *Star Trek* conventions took off in the early '70s. There was one in Washington DC, back in '71 or '72, which had Harlan Ellison and Isaac Asimov. They stood at opposite ends of this auditorium, and they each had a hand-held mike and fought about the future while we sat around. It was just great. And they showed us a rough cut of *A Boy and His Dog,* with Don Johnson."

"I hesitated going to conventions for a long time because I really couldn't believe anybody would want to see someone who's only been in four or five episodes!"

Will this holodeck version of Picard (from "Hollow Pursuits") submit to a superior swordsman? Barclay's banking on it!

Being a professional and a fan at the same time rarely seem to mix...

"Yeah, when you're in the business, and you're an actor, you can't really participate in that sort of stuff, because you're working six days a week. That said, I was as thrilled to be on the show as anyone who used to watch it would be. It really is a great pleasure."

As well as his *Star Trek* work, Dwight recently appeared in another revival of a classic '60s series...

"I just finished *The Outer Limits.* I worked with a wonderful Canadian actress, Alberta Watson, and we had some heavy duty special effects – we were covered with slime, an ethyl cellulose which they use in McDonalds milkshakes (!). It was an old-fashioned horror/science fiction story, and I can't wait to see how it looks on screen!"

Barclay's return in season two of Star Trek: Voyager *won't appear on Sky until the end of '96, at the earliest.*

Stars of the show: Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* (left and right), based on the comics by Masamune Shirow, looks to be the biggest anime film since *Akira*; *Proteus* (below right) is a Brit horror flick in the tradition of *Alien*; Ralph Fiennes stars in *Strange Days*.

Strange opening for the London Film Festival

Nigel Floyd sorts out the high-quality SF from the chaff at this year's LFF...

Gasps of surprise and delight greeted London Film Festival director Sheila Whitaker's brave announcement that this year's opening film would be Kathryn Bigelow's *Strange Days*. The festival, which runs from November 2-19 at the National Film Theatre, will also be premièring a number of other genre films, making it a must-attend for science fiction movie fans.

The eagerly awaited opening film is a bleak vision of a dystopian near-future, where the boundary between virtual entertainment and reality is quickly being dissolved. Ralph Fiennes plays Nero, an ex-cop turned "Santa Claus of the sub-conscious," whose sale of illegal virtual reality discs (through which any human activity can be vicariously experienced) has horrific repercussions when he receives one featuring the rape and murder of an ex-helper, Iris.

Other sci-fi offerings to be shown at the LFF include two titles featuring the Internet. The first is Iain Softley's *Hackers*, which describes the virtual antics of freaks with handles such as Cereal Killer, Crash Override and Zero Cool. This cyber-thriller

***Proteus*' Craig Fairbrass, ex-of *London's Burning*, is a Brit cop in *severe* trouble...**

made the news earlier this year when its own Web site was hacked – although the more sceptical among us suspect a publicity stunt.

The other Internet related title is *Ghost in the Shell*, a Japanese animated feature set in 2029, and tipped by those in the know to become the biggest anime-inspired movie since *Akira*. Using state-of-the-art computer techniques, director Mamoru Oshii follows a group of cyborg cops as they try to hunt down a "ghost" (human qualities buried in a computer) which has created a body for itself and gone rogue.

Waving the battered flag for home-grown SF product is sfx wizard Bob Keen's theatrical debut, the SF/horror feature *Proteus* (detailed in SFX2). Stranded on an abandoned oil rig, six shipwrecked survivors stumble upon a secret laboratory used for experiments into DNA manipulation. Now roaming the rig is the result of the scientists' work – a mutating monster that absorbs its victims and then takes on their characteristics.

More conventional horror fans are well served, too, with Lars Von Trier's surreal, subversive four-hour TV soap opera *The Kingdom* heading up a strong programme that also includes Michael Almereda's arty vampire film *Nadja*, Japanese director Shimako Sato's devilish horror movie *Wizard of Darkness*, and the wicked Spanish black comedy *Justino: A Senior Citizen Killer.*

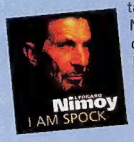
Other titles of interest include Anthony Waller's confident, John Landis-like psychological thriller *Mute Witness*, and *Reflecting Skin* director Philip Ridley's weird, apocalyptic religious fable *The Passion of Darkly Noon.*

Want to know more? Then phone the LFF box-office on ☎ (0171) 928 3232 for details of dates, times and ticket availability.

THIS JUST IN...

NIMOY SIGNING!

Leonard Nimoy – *Star Trek's* Mr Spock, of *course* – will be signing copies of his new autobiography *I Am Spock* at Forbidden Planet in London, where they're expecting their "biggest turn out ever." The signing will take place on Thursday 16 November – prepare to queue, and don't bother bringing any other bits and pieces along. He'll be signing the book, and nothing but the book...



DANTE'S IN FOR NOW

Top film director Joe Dante, whose previous small-screen work includes the excellent *Eerie, Indiana,* will direct the pilot feature and other episodes of *The Osiris Chronicles.* The series was created by Caleb Carr, whose Victorian psychological crime novel *The Alienist* received a certain amount of critical acclaim. Carr describes the forthcoming Paramount series as "a space show that takes place following the time period which *Star Trek* takes place in," although there is no indication that there will be any direct connection between the two shows.

HAIR-CONDITIONING

Revealed at last – the secret of Captain Janeway's immaculate hair! When you have the chance to watch the *Voyager* episode "37ers," look for a shot, about five minutes in, of a close-up of the Captain which shows her being thrown forward by a jolt to the ship. A lengthy strand of her hair can quite clearly be seen to fall out of place, flop forward, then magically reverse its motion and reintegrate itself into her general coiffure!

Suspecting complex computer-animated hi-jinks, your determined SFX team studied the brief shot repeatedly and deduced that the film, in fact, reverses itself halfway through! So next time you criticise the lovely Kathryn Janeway's unruffled hair as unrealistic, just remember that 25th century beauty technology has progressed to the level of self-repairing hairstyles!

KEEP WATCHING THE SKIES!

The fashion for remaking '60s TV series continues, with the announcement that *The Invaders* is to return as a four-hour mini-series on the Fox Network. It will star Scott Bakula, best known as Sam Beckett in *Quantum Leap* and soon to be seen (if the distributors get their act together) as Harry D'Amour in *Lord of Illusions.*

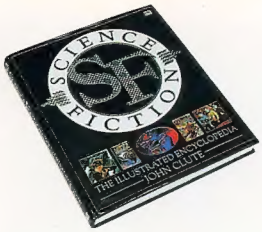
The original series – soon to be shown on The Sci-Fi Channel – was made by Quinn Martin (also responsible for *The Fugitive)* and starred Roy Thinnes as architect David Vincent, who, if you remember, tried to persuade America it was full of aliens and then discovered that everyone he spoke to was, um, an alien. Thinnes will make a guest appearance in the remake.

EXPLOITATION 'R' US

Latest addition to the SFX We-don't-care-what-it's-like-we-want-to-see-it-anyway files is a film written by and starring Mary Woronov *(Terrorvision,* etc), also starring Barbara Steele *(Black Sunday,* etc.) and Martine Beswick *(Dr Jekyll & Sister Hyde,* etc). The title: *Vampire Cult Queens From Hell.* The plot? Who cares?

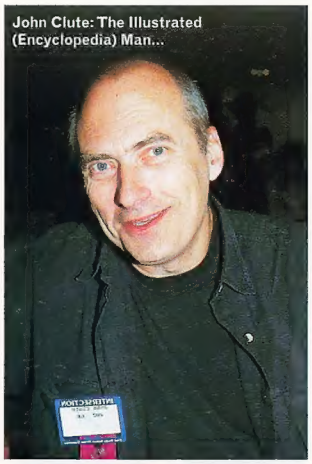
YOU ARE WHAT YOU WEAR

Radio executive Gavin McCoy, recently appointed head of Capitol Gold, reckons coining the term "anorak" in 1978 to describe dweeby types his "proudest achievement," according to trade mag *Broadcast.* However, since, Mr McCoy most identifies with the TV character of "Mr Data of *Star Trek,*" SFX reckon he should take a *long* look at the state of his pot/kettle interface! *Continued on page 11*



Brace yourself, Santa...

...because a lot of SF fans are going to be putting *Science Fiction: The Illustrated Encyclopedia* on their Crimbo lists in the next few weeks, and we've gotta warn you, it weighs a fair bit. **MJ Simpson** met up with its author, John Clute, at the book's launch bash at London's Museum of the Moving Image...


John Clute: The Illustrated (Encyclopedia) Man...

Canadian by birth, John Clute moved to London in 1969, and is widely regarded as the best SF reviewer around, having started in the field writing for *New Worlds* in the '60s. He was associate editor of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* in 1979, and co-editor of the second edition in 1992. Now he has written *Science Fiction: The Illustrated Encyclopedia*, which begs the question: Isn't enough enough?

"This book's actually meant to be a sort of 'encyclopedia companion.' The idea originally came from Krystyna Mayer of Dorling Kindersley, who telephoned me out of the blue a year and a half ago. She'd seen *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, and thought there was an opportunity for a complimentary book. Dorling Kindersley worked out the rough design with me, long in advance of writing, and I worked to those design spreads. I'd graded how heavily each author would be treated, so I knew that I had, say, 1,200 words to write about Philip K Dick, and another 200 words to fill in about a particular novel."

Not unlike doing a magazine, really. And, like a magazine, an illustrated book needs illustrations. Clute's certainly has plenty of those...

"We photographed about 1,000 dust-wrappers from my own library, and those gave us a sort of 'texture of time,' because being about science fiction doesn't mean that the book is about the future. After all, we already have 80 years of science fiction, which constitutes a kind of on-going and constantly transforming version of the 20th century as it sees itself. That was one of the things we talked about from the very first; that we had to have contemporary illustrations."

One potential problem with such a project is finding a practical definition of that nebulous term "science fiction..."

"Science fiction you can define roughly – rather arbitrarily, but with some practical success. What we were trying to do with this book was write something which served a need. And that need wasn't to know precisely, 100% for sure, that a book on the fringe of the field is or isn't SF according to somebody else's criteria. No, what we wanted to do was include books which we thought might possibly be SF."

And if "science fiction" is tricky to define, what about "fantasy"?

"Yes, I'm writing *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* now with John Grant, and that's much more difficult. The term 'fantasy' is immensely porous. The various fields of the fantastic, excluding science fiction, are like a series of fuzzy sets..."

What of the existence of "Clute-isms," John's infamous predilection for lexicographical reconditeness (i.e. Too many obscure words)? Clute admits that even he has problems with this habit:

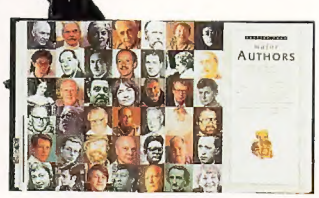
"I've just been editing a number of pieces that I've written since about 1987 for a book called *Look at the Evidence*. And every once in a while I'd come across a passage *I* didn't bloody understand! And if I didn't understand it after three or four re-readings, I re-wrote it!"

In 1982, Clute was one of the founders of *Interzone*, the UK's leading SF fiction magazine, which recently celebrated both its 100th issue and its first Hugo. He still contributes book reviews.

"I was enormously pleased to reach issue 100 since certain eminent folk thought that four would be the limit. I think it's all down to David Pringle, who sits there and does the job. It's because of him that it existed in 1985, and it's because of him that it exists now.

"I see no reason for *Interzone* not to reach issue 200 – it doesn't require many subscriptions and it doesn't require much consumer loyalty."

Science Fiction: The Illustrated Encyclopedia *is published by Dorling Kindersley and costs £25. It was reviewed last issue.*



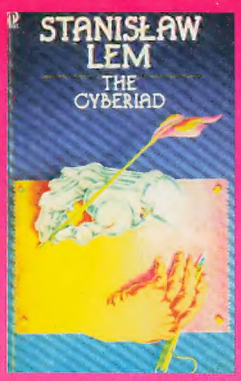
If it's science-fiction related and somebody has drawn, painted or photographed it, chances are it'll be in *The Illustrated Encyclopedia*...

I'm Sorry, I Haven't a Clute

Here are four Clutisms from *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. Do *you* know what they mean?

1 Adumbration.
2 Sententiousness.
3 Sclerotic.
4 Sufism.

Answers:
1 Faint indication or shadow.
2 Fondness for using proverbs.
3 Having hardened arteries.
4 No idea! This one isn't even in our *Dictionary of Difficult Words!*



So, who is... Stanislaw Lem?

Briefly:
Poland's leading SF author, now ex-patriate, whose densely written works and complex language-based writing style have caused countless headaches in 30 different languages.

Is he any good?
Can you name any other Polish writers? Obviously, some credit must go to his translators, but he can't be as internationally successful as he is without *some* talent. Just be aware that "good" does not necessarily equate with "easy to read."

Major works:
His most famous book – filmed in 1971 by Andre Tarkovsky – is *Solaris*, but don't expect to understand it. *Tales* (and *More Tales) of Pirx the Pilot* are very funny collections of linked stories about the galaxy's unluckiest spaceman. *The Cyberiad* is humorously philosophical musings by two robots, Trurl and Klapaucius, while *The Futurological Congress* examines the fictitious science of studying future history by inventing new slang terms!

What's he like?
Very heavy going. Considering how tightly structured his work is, full of puns and complex linguistic devices, it's amazing it survives translation. Not all his books employ typical narrative devices either, e.g. *A Perfect Vacuum* comprises reviews of books which don't (and can't!) exist.

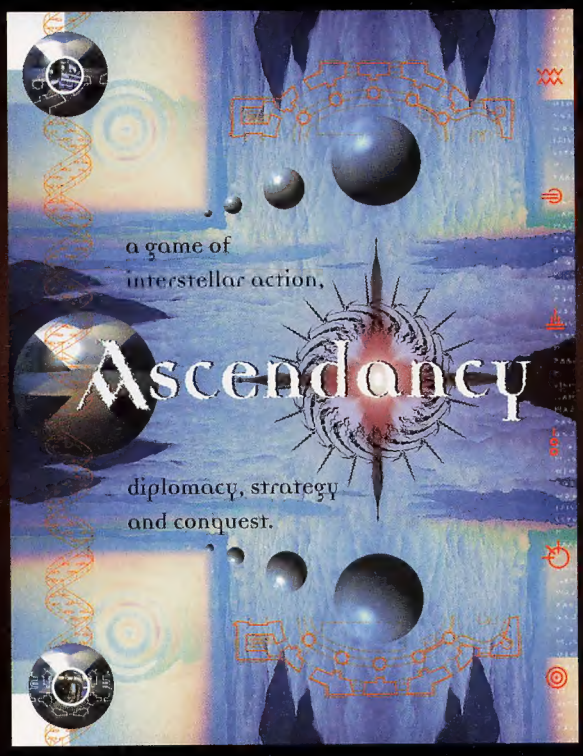
Key themes:
The dangers of technological and/or militaristic autocracy; the subjugation of the individual; the futility of life in a crazy universe... Political and social themes are dealt with in typically satirical East European fashion. However, Lem never takes life too seriously.

Suggested reading:
Try starting with *Fiasco*, a (relatively) straightforward novel in which humanity's greatest achievement – an expedition to an inhabited planet – fails miserably when the aliens steadfastly refuse to communicate. *Tales of Pirx the Pilot* is also fairly accessible; especially the story which deals with humanity's first contact with extra-terrestrials. An alien craft flies right past Pirx's ship, but he can't record the encounter because his entire crew is down with chicken pox!

How exactly do you pronounce his surname?
It rhymes with "hem."

MJ Simpson

Ascendancy



PC CD-ROM

THE LOGIC FACTORY

Virgin
INTERACTIVE
entertainment

The age of discovery is upon you.
Explore the unknown using a delicate balance
of courage and caution.
Ascendancy is a galactic strategy game of
exploration and encounter.
Take control of any one of the 21 species while
you attempt to cultivate your planet's
knowledge, industrial capabilities
and military might.
The survival of an entire species is at stake.
Will your people fade into obscurity or gain
Ascendancy over a galaxy?

- Ascendancy's sophisticated Artificial Intelligence extends gameplay and offers indepth interaction and diplomacy with alien species.
- The game features superb SVGA graphics.
- The comprehensive tutorial mode coupled with a simple and intuitive interface ensures instant access to the game and in depth help throughout.
- Digital soundtrack featuring an original score and realistic sound effects.

©&℗ 1995 Logic Factory Inc. All rights reserved. Ascendancy™ is a trademark of The Logic Factory, Inc.
Distributed by Virgin Interactive Entertainment (Europe) Ltd. Virgin is a registered trademark of Virgin Interactive Entertainment Ltd.

"Don't quote us!"

Remember that '70's rock opera version of *The War of the Worlds*? Well, its producer, Jeff Wayne, is finally getting close to bringing his vision of HG Wells' most famous novel to the big screen, after nigh on 20 years of planning. The whole thing will be done as an animated epic, using state-of-the-art computer graphics to bring the Martian war machines to life...

Speaking of '70s music, remember the pop group Sparks? Well, for the past ten years or so the group's been working on a labour of love – to turn the Japanese comic strip *Mai the Psychic Girl* into a musical. It now seems likely that the whole thing has been given the go-ahead, with Winona Ryder taking the lead, Tim Burton in the director's chair, and kd lang on board to provide Ryder's singing voice.

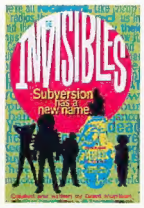
In the meantime, Burton's been hard at work on *Mars Attacks!*, based on the '50s gum-card series, which was infamous for its gore-content, and featured such pleasant titles as "Destroying a Dog." The live action material (featuring actors and animatronics) is now nearing completion, with the animation team from *A Nightmare Before Christmas* due to take over shortly. They'll have at least 18 months of stop-motion animation work ahead of them as they attempt to bring the alien invaders to life.

James Cameron has pushed plans to bring *Spider-Man* to life to one side for the moment, and has instead taken on the task of bringing his own version of *The Titanic* to the big screen. This has been underway for some time, and actually involves Cameron using high-tech camera equipment to film several shots of the real vessel on the seabed off the coast of Russia. Rumours in the special effects industry have it that the disaster may well be caused by aliens from a certain other Cameron film... *The Abyss!*

Could there be the smell of mickey-take in the air? Something called (groan) *The Z-Files* is currently in pre-production, featuring the exploits of a pair of secret agents called Sculdar and... *Continued on page 16*

The Best of

***Blake's 7*'s Paul Darrow stars as an unpleasant town councillor in *The Gruesome Grannies of Gobshott Hall* (right), but he hasn't reckoned with the grannies (below right); Meanwhile, Grant Morrison's *The Invisibles* (below) is coming on apace.**



Jaye Griffiths returns in the second season of *Bugs*, for which more impressive props are promised.

Domestic science fiction TV shows come in a number of different varieties: The borderline *(Bliss, Bugs)*, the don't-hold-your-breath (too many to mention), and *Red Dwarf*. That said, there *are* original stirrings, vastly encouraged by the success of *The X-Files* on BBC 2. The following list doesn't cover every show in development, but it does illustrate that genre programming in the UK is in a healthier state than many would imagine too. (Of course, why there should *still* be so little of it about when imported SF shows earn top ratings on satellite and terrestrial TV, the video shelves are packed with *Who* and *Trek*, and old troopers are constantly being pulled out of hiding to prop up the schedules, is something we can only guess at...)

Already with us

Bliss

The first one-and-a-half hour episode, of this *X-Files*-ish series has already been shown on the ITV network, with two further one-and-a-half hour scripts ready to roll if viewing figures support it. The show focuses on Professor Simon Bliss (played by Simon Shepherd from *Peak Practice*), a Cambridge don and popular-science radio host, who gets himself involved in cases of the bizarre. The extent to which the show will develop in an SF direction is, as yet, unclear – this could either become a more realistic *X-Files*, or simply a *Morse* lookalike with a scientific bent – but it's potentially the most exciting British genre show in years.

The Gruesome Grannies of Gobshott Hall

This *Power Rangers* spoof, produced by and shown on Sky One, follows

the antics of three old ladies who morph into superheroes to fight evil councillor Gussett (Paul Darrow) and gain ownership of their retirement home. It "fuses the popularity of the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* with that of *One Foot in the Grave*," claims director John FD Northover...

Coming in '96

Bugs

The new 13-episode season of surprise success *Bugs* is about to be shot by Carnival Films for showing in 1996. A (slightly) new direction for the near future adventure show sees the science fiction angle pushed to the fore, with more impressive props – and an opening episode that sends one of the team into space on the space shuttle.

Cold Lazarus

The second of two posthumous Dennis Potter plays – the first, *Karaoke*, was only very tenuously SF – is to be shown on both BBC 2 and Channel 4 within a week of each other in early '96. *Cold Lazarus* is the story of a dead author who finds he's become part of a museum exhibit in the future – and boasts a strong cast, headlined by Albert Finney and Frances de la Tour.

The Invisibles

BBC Scotland's adaptation of Grant Morrison's *The Invisibles* comic is continuing apace now DC Comics,

British

There *is* life in homegrown SF TV...

British science fiction and fantasy-based TV may seem on its sickbed at times, but it's not ready to pop its clogs just yet. Following last month's massive US TV Preview, **Matt Bielby** casts his eye over some of the most prominent British SF TV projects currently in development...

The Invisibles US publisher, has turned down its "first refusal" option on any TV project.

The show, which is intended to go out as six half-hour episodes on Saturday nights at 9pm on BBC 2, may start filming in the first half of '96. The storyline for the six episodes is based on the first four issues of the comic book, introducing the character of teenage joyrider Dane MacGowan – codename: "Jack Frost" – and telling of his first meeting with an "Invisibles" cell, led by the charismatic King Mob, a secret terrorist group fighting a mysterious war against a massive inter-dimensional conspiracy.

Things could still go pear shaped, of course, but at the moment it looks likely that *The Invisibles* will surface as a "culty, youth" show sometime in late '96.

Red Dwarf

Another series is in the works, but don't expect it yet. There's to be a Christmas special at the end of '96, with a longer season than usual to follow. Rob Grant will write at least six of them. Robert Llewelyn (Kryten) may do a handful too.

Wilderness

Written by Andrew Davies *(A Very Peculiar Practice, House of Cards, Game On, Pride and Prejudice)* and Bernadette Davis, from a novel by American author Dennis Danzers, *Wilderness* is the story of a woman who occasionally turns into a wolf. The original story is set in urban Virginia and the wilds of Canada, but will probably be relocated to the UK for this four-part drama. The show is being shot by production company Red Rooster for Central, and is likely to be shown in late '96.

Longer term (if ever)...

Delta Wave

This replacement for the recent new-look series of *The Tomorrow People* is still at the writing stage. More news as we get it.

Discworld

Granada's live action adaptation of Terry Pratchett's Discworld series is still being scripted, with casting and filming schedule as yet unconfirmed. We can reveal, however, that it *won't* be based on the first Discworld novel, *The Colour of Magic*. (We here at SFX reckon it'll be *Guards! Guards!* or the witches book *Weird Sisters.)*

Darrow isn't the only *Blake's 7* guy back in SF – Gareth Thomas stars in *The Mentors*.

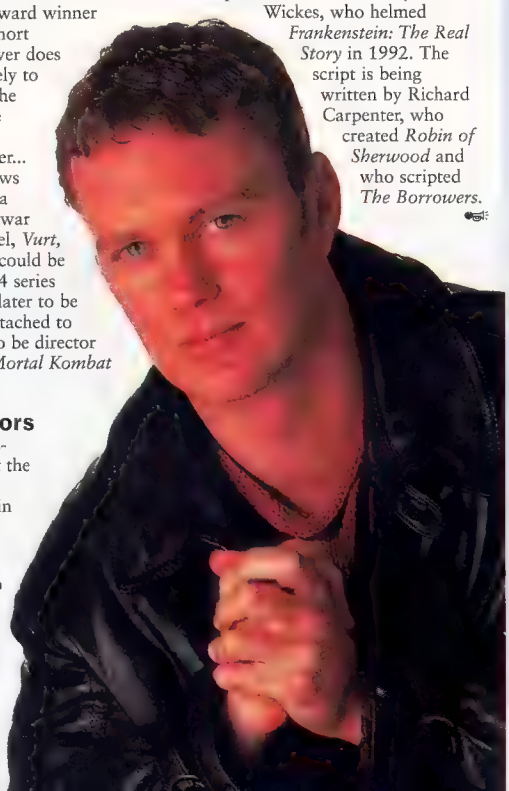
Future Shock

Little looks likely to happen with the EVTV project *Future Shock* – a series of science fiction shorts written by Grant Morrison and Manchester's John W Campbell award winner Jeff Noon – in the short term, at least. If it ever does surface it's more likely to be made by one of the braver satellite/cable channels than any terrestrial broadcaster...

Meanwhile, news has reached SFX of a Hollywood bidding war for Noon's first novel, *Vurt*, one result of which could be a six-hour Channel 4 series based on the book, later to be cut into a movie. Attached to this project is said to be director Paul Anderson, of *Mortal Kombat* and *Shopping* fame.

The Mentors

The Gareth Thomas-starring series about the descendants of Atlanteans fighting in the modern world appears to have got enough financing to go ahead – more detailed news as and when.



Craig McLachlan reportedly makes a trip into space in the *Bugs* season opener!

Terry Pratchett's Discworld

The Granada project isn't the only Pratchett-based series being prepared in Manchester... Local cartoon-masters Cosgrove Hall are producing their own series, an animated show based on the novels *Mort* and *Reaper Man*. The series will be done in stop-motion, like Cosgrove Hall's earlier adaptation of *Truckers*, although other animation styles may be used as well.

Weaveworld

The BBC's adaptation of Clive Barker's epic fantasy is still at an early stage of development. Michael Marshall Smith (quite well known for his cyberpunky novel *Only Forward)* is doing the script, with *Proteus* director Bob Keen on board for the fx.

Van Helsing

David Wickes Productions is behind this two-hour TV movie, which will serve as the pilot for a possible series, chronicling the vampire-buster's further adventures as "a sort of supernatural Indiana Jones." The pilot will be directed by David Wickes, who helmed *Frankenstein: The Real Story* in 1992. The script is being written by Richard Carpenter, who created *Robin of Sherwood* and who scripted *The Borrowers*.

THIS JUST IN...

Elementary

Canadian Norstar Entertainment is working on a series of four two-hour TV movies under the collective title *Sherlock Holmes vs the Villains of the Period*. In each lengthy episode, Victorian England's greatest detective will battle a suitably Victorian bad guy, the culprits being as follows: the Phantom of the Opera, Jack the Ripper, Dr Caligari and Dracula!

Break a Leg

Fans of government-backed alien cover-up conspiracy theories will enjoy a new play by fringe theatre group Serio Ensemble. *The Men In Black* is not specifically based on the soon-to-be-filmed comic of that name, but covers the same ground, as mysterious dudes in suits 'n' shades try to persuade terrified locals that it was all just a meteorite, okay? The play runs at the The Pigeon Loft, Holloway Road (directly behind the National Youth Theatre) on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 9 November to 2 December.

Tickets cost £7/£4; phone ☎ (0171) 281 7683/7745 for details.

New SF movies "on the way"

When Guillermo Del Toro's *Cronos* was released two years ago, the question everyone was asking was: How do you follow the best Mexican horror movie since *Wrestling Women Versus the Aztec Mummy?* The answer, apparently, is by adapting Christopher Fowler's novel of Faustian demonia *Spanky* (see review in SFX2). More tentatively optioned by assorted film companies are Fowler's first novel, *Roofworld*, and *The Munsters*.

Big bad dorn

Readers of Heavy Metal mag *Kerrang* in the '80s were entertained by a comic strip called *The Döminatör* (sic), but who could have guessed that the same character would go on to become a hit in Japanese manga?

Created by Alan Grant *(Batman, Judge Dredd)* and Tony Luke *(Psychonauts, Hellkat), Dominator* has run successfully in the top-selling monthly manga anthology *Comic Afternoon.* The character also made a guest appearance in a Tsuyoshi (TV anime) story in the mag's sister publication, *Comic Morning,* which has over one million readers!

Now the *Döminatör* has been picked up for possible screen development by Spice Factory, a UK movie house which is part of Epic Interactive, Europe's largest multimedia development company.

Pan "one more time"

Not content with his live-action remake of *101 Dalmatians*, John Hughes is now lined up to write, produce and direct a live-action remake of *Peter Pan* for Tristar/Walt

Continued on page 12

THIS JUST IN...

Disney. Given that John Hughes was kidnapped by aliens shortly after making *Some Kind of Wonderful* in 1987 and replaced by a zero-talented android double, suggestions of the "It can't be worse than *Hook*" variety are dubious in the extreme.

HUNCHBACK

TNT is planning a new version of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame,* to be directed by Frank Roddam, the guy who revamped the Frankenstein story ten years ago in *The Bride.* Meanwhile Disney's animated version of the Victor Hugo classic is already well underway, with voices supplied by Tom Hulce and Demi Moore.

STEVENSON TRIPLE-TREAT

RL Stevenson section: *Dr Jekyll & Ms Hyde* is finished and ready to go. *The Nutty Professor* is finished and ready to go. But Columbia-Tristar are still faffing around with *Mary Reilly,* which is what the other two Hyde-ian movies are cashing in on. Expect all three sometime next year.

THE SEARCH FOR DUNE

Electric Video is searching for the rights to release a four-hour version of David Lynch's bizarre epic *Dune.* The company, which is currently re-releasing almost the entire Lynch back catalogue, including *Eraserhead, The Elephant Man* and *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me,* is hoping that the director's cut version of *Dune* will be available by October. If not, it'll be the normal UK version that's been released a zillion times before, although it may be in Widescreen.

SHURELY SHOME MISHTAKE?

If you have an American first edition of John Barnes'

Continued on page 14

Stand by for auction!

Unless you've spent the last few months trapped in a monorail hanging precariously over a cliff-face, you'll have heard about Sylvia Anderson selling off her collection of Supermarionation puppets. A penniless **MJ Simpson** went along to the auction, desperately trying not to scratch his nose...

"It's time for somebody else to have the chance to own this stuff," says ex-Century 21 technician John Read, who put his old Gerry Anderson props up for sale at Phillips auction rooms on 19 September, alongside similar collections owned by sculptress Mary Turner, and, of course, Sylvia Anderson. John and Mary worked for the Andersons throughout the '60s, beginning on *Torchy* and *Twizzle* respectively.

"We decided to join with Sylvia to make this sale really special," explained Mary at the Bayswater, London auction rooms. "It seemed a good idea to sell all our collections together."

Although John's favourite character – Mitch the Monkey from *Supercar* – wasn't for sale, Mary's original Marina puppet (one of five figures in full costume, mounted on wooden bases) fetched £10,000 after a brief bidding battle.

Joe 90 and Father Stanley Unwin (from *The Secret Service)* went for £9,000 and £5,000 respectively, both below their estimates. By contrast, the first lot went for £5,000 more than expected. It was, of course, Lady Penelope Creighton-Ward, for which an anonymous telephone bidder shelled out a cool £30,000. The other full puppet, Captain Scarlet, was bought by mega-fan and ace model-builder Phil Ray for £18,000.

A further 109 lots, consisting, in the main, of disembodied heads, generally sold for about £2-300 apiece. Price was determined not so much by condition, but by recognisability, with "name" characters obviously the most popular. Phil Ray snapped up an eyeless Captain Ochre for £720, for instance, although he disappointingly missed out on Captain Blue. Estimated at £250-350, that head went for a staggering £1,700! Two hairless Symphony Angels sold for £240 and £160, but the third – with that all-important wig – fetched £880!

Disappointingly, the majority of heads on sale were of the "properly proportioned" type used in *Captain Scarlet, Joe 90* and *The Secret Service,* while others were "revamps" (i.e. heads from previous series used as extras). The few *Supercar* heads to survive went for very high prices indeed: £500 for Jimmy Gibson, £780 for Masterspy, and £1,250 for Mike Mercury, while Tintin from *Thunderbirds* fetched an astonishing £1,150. Biggest surprise of all was "a collection of ten pairs of green hands from *Stingray.*" Estimated at £40-60, these went for £500 – a whopping five quid per finger! Lady Penelope's fur-lined coat made a similar half-grand, while Jeff Tracey's shirt sold for £420. A pair of spectacles from *Joe 90* went for £300, and they weren't even Joe's! Every lot went, and the whole sale netted well over £100,000.

Those whose bank balances enabled them to take advantage of this unique sale were very pleased with the event; Anderson fans in particular were relieved to see that not many items left the UK...

Masterspy and Mike Mercury (top), Jimmy Gibson (bottom), and – in the centre – a black Joe 90!

PRODUCTION HELL

(New SF and fantasy film projects from across the globe, some of which may even get made!)

Edited by **Steve Holland**

If ever there was a place where things are guaranteed to go pear-shaped, it's Hollywood, so while Production Hell is accurate at press time, you should still expect the odd change here and there before films go before the camera – or hit the big screen.

http://www.futurenet.co.uk

Key: Dir – Director; Scr – Scriptwriter; ExPrd – Executive Producer; Prd – Producer; St – Starring.

● **ABOMINABLE** (Universal) Scr Troy Neighbours & Steven Feinberg. Jean-Claude *(TimeCop)* Van Damme has signed up to lead a United Nations task force to the Himalayas to investigate missing Red Cross workers. Shooting will probably begin in 1996.

● **THE BOATHOUSE** (Parallax/Trinity) Supernatural thriller based on a script by Stephen Gallagher, and currently under development.

● **THE BOY FROM MERCURY** (Mercurian Productions/Blue Rose/Blue Dahlia) Dir/Scr Martin Duffy. ExPrd Jo Manuel. Prd Marina Hughes. St James Hickey, Rita Tushingham, Joanne Marie Gerrard, Hugh O'Conor, Tom Courenay. A young boy believes he comes from the planet Mercury. The five-week shoot began in Ireland on 6 August.

Van Damme kickboxes with a giant carpet in *Abominable.*

● **THE DEMOLITIONIST** (Alliance) Dir Robert Kurtzman. Scr Kurtzman, John (Graveyard Shift) Esposito. St Nicole Eggert, Richard Grieco, Tom Savini, Heather *(Nightmare on Elm Street)* Langenkamp, Jack Nance. A reanimated woman is the hero in this comic book style thriller.

● **DOCTOR WHO** (BBC/Amblin) Producer Philip Segal has confirmed that shooting of the new *Who* telefilm will begin on 20 November in Seattle and Vancouver, with transmission set for February 1996 in both UK and USA. While the Doctor himself has yet to be cast, the thesp Simon Callow is the front-runner. Sylvester McCoy will film a bridging transformation sequence. Other elements of the old *Who* will be retained – so no new TARDIS, title sequence or theme tune.

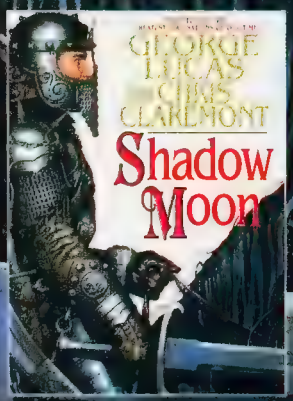
● **DO NOT GO GENTLE** Dir Rob Cohen. Scr David & Peter

When two great imaginations collide...

Shadow Moon

GEORGE LUCAS AND CHRIS CLAREMONT

Discover the towering new fantasy adventure from the creator of *Star Wars*® and the author of the *X-Men* adventures...



IN ALL GOOD BOOKSHOPS NOW IN BANTAM PRESS HARDCOVER

THIS JUST IN...

Kaleidoscope Century, published this year by Tor Books, you have one seriously error-packed volume. A trade ad from Tor lists 15 significant textual errors, and offers to replace first editions with corrected second copies. Send your copy to: Tor Books, Attention: Department KC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, USA, enclosing your name and address on a separate sheet of paper.

Of course, true bibliophiles will want to hold on to their first editions because of these very errors, and the sadder ones will more than likely buy a second edition anyway...

NO STRINGS ATTACHED

A cast of genre names is being assembled for the Kushner-Locke/Savoy Pictures adaptation of Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio,* now entitled *Carlo Collodi's Pinocchio.* (Presumably this means it will be as faithful to its source as *Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book* or *Bram Stoker's Dracula.)* Starring as *puppetmeister* Gepetto is Martin Landau from *Space: 1999, Mission: Impossible,* and, um, *Ed: Wood.* Rob Schneider, whose performance as Fergie was (arguably) one of the few entertaining bits in *Judge Dredd*-ful, is also in the cast, along with the original *Star Trek: Voyager* captain, Genevieve Bujold. Bebe Neuwirth (Lilith in *Cheers)* and Jonathan Taylor Thomas *(Home Improvement)* add to the project's marketability. Steve Barron directs from a script he co-wrote with Sherry Mills and Tom Benedek.

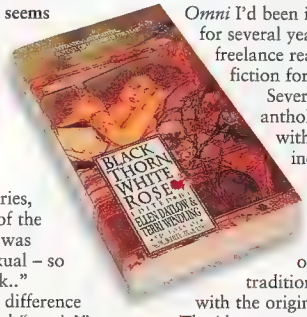
SHE'S CREEPY AND SHE'S KOOKY...

Author Anne Rice kicked off her signing tour for *Memnoch: The Devil,* fifth volume in *The Vampire Chronicles,* with a publicity stunt which could best be described as "weird" – she staged her own funeral. Preceded by a jazz band, she was carried, clad in a wedding-gown, through New Orleans, riding in a coffin atop an antique hearse. Free beer was on tap as Rice signed copies of her book *en route.*

Sex, fairy tales & kitty cats...

In the world of science fiction and fantasy, editors are often as important as authors, and Ellen Datlow is one of the best. **MJ Simpson** cornered her at the 1995 Worldcon, where she was nominated for a Hugo, and asked her about SF, sex, fantasy, sex, horror and, erm, more sex.

Fiction editor of US science mag *Omni* since 1981, Ellen Datlow has also co-edited the annual *Year's Best Fantasy & Horror* collection since its inception in 1988, along with a variety of original anthologies, starting with the vampire collection *Blood Is Not Enough* in 1989. Recent titles have included the sex 'n' SF collection *Alien Sex* and the sex 'n' horror collection *Little Deaths.* Hmm, there seems to be a common thread here...



"Initially, the idea was to do an erotic horror anthology," she explains of *Little Deaths,* "but as I started acquiring stories, I realised that most of the fiction I was getting was not erotic; it was sexual – so I broadened the book.."

But what *is* the difference between "sexual" and "erotic?"

"When it comes down to it, there *are* certain objective criteria. *Alien Sex* was not meant to be erotic at all. It was meant to be about alien sexuality, and it turned out more to be about male and female sexuality. The thing about editing an anthology is that it evolves as you edit it. I'm not so twisted that I won't try to fit in a really good story that fits the theme."

Datlow is not an author herself, so how did she get to be an editor?

"I read all kinds of things while I was growing up: Ray Bradbury, Harlan Ellison... I was brought up on short fiction. I read the *Best of the Year* anthologies in the early '70s and the Paul Carnell *New Writings in SF* books. But I also read a lot of mainstream novels. When I got to *Omni* I'd been in book publishing for several years, and did some freelance reading of science fiction for book publishers."

Several of Ellen's anthologies are co-edited with Terri Windling, including *The Year's Best Fantasy & Horror,* but the pair's most distinctive books are their original anthologies of traditional fairy tales, retold with the original adult sensibilities. The idea was conceived by Windling and artist Thomas Canty, whose artwork graces the US editions. The first volume, *Snow White, Blood Red,* is published in the UK by Signet, through their Creed imprint. The second, *Black Thorn, White Rose* is now out in paperback in America, where the third, *Ruby Slippers, Golden Tears,* will appear in hardback in December. And she's hard at work on other collections too...

A lot of anthologies. Do you ever worry you're doing too many?

"Well, I sometimes worry that there are too many anthologies published on themes that are cutting it too thinly. I do anthologies because I enjoy it, and I always try to do subjects I enjoy."

Like sex, obviously...

> **"I sometimes worry that there are too many anthologies on themes that are cutting it too thinly. I do anthologies because I enjoy it, and I always try to do subjects I enjoy."**

Griffith. Sean Connery has been signed up to play a terminally ill astronaut whose eternal regret is that he aborted a moon mission and becomes obsessed with making the trip before dying.

● **THE DOME** (Summit Entertainment) Modestly budgeted SF story scripted by first-timer Andy Bottacaro, currently with producers Heidi Lester and Andrew Martin.

● **ESCAPE FROM LOS ANGELES** Dir John Carpenter. St Kurt Russell. Russell has hit mega-status with a $10 million paycheck to reprise his role as Snake Pliskin from *Escape to New York,* while Carpenter receives $5 million for the job. *Escape* will roll early next year.

Sly McCoy may be in the new *Doctor Who,* but Bonnie won't!

● **INDIANA JONES 4** Steven Spielberg and George Lucas have been been quoted as saying that the franchise would only be revived if there was a great script – and now Jeffrey Boam, who penned *The Last Crusade,* is about to take a stab at it.

● **IRON MAN** (Fox) Scr Andrew Chapman. ExPrd Avi Arad, Stan Lee. Prd John Langley, Elie Cohn, Stephen Chao. Based on the Marvel comic character. Both Coppola's Zoetrope company (Albert Cox as a possible director) and Universal (Stuart Gordon directing) have shown interest. Now it appears to be at Fox – with *no* director.

● **KICKS** (Muse Productions) Dir Ernest Dickerson. Scr Matthew Bright. An illegal drug turns junkies into monsters in this futuristic thriller from the director of *Demon Knight.*

● **LIGHT YEARS** (Miramax) Anthology title from Miramax's *Dimension* offshoot, produced by Michael Phillips, which will feature Bryan Singer's adaptation of Isaac Asimov's "The Last Question," plus segments by Frank *(Shawshank Redemption)* Darabont, Guillermo *(Cronos)* del Torro, and Gary *(Things To Do in Denver When You're Dead)* Fleder, who will adapt Philip K Dick's "The Imposter." Leonard Nimoy is still in discussion to direct an episode.

● **MARS ATTACKS!** (Warner) Dir Tim Burton. Scr Jonathan Gems. Prd Burton, Laurie Parker. Based on the classic 1962 trading cards. Was to have begun shooting in LA and Washington on 14 August, but that's now

X-Wing celebrates Star Wars "last chance buy"

X-Wings hit the road in a special promotional tour, discovers **Matt Bielby.**

As part of the hoopla for the new video re-releases of all three *Star Wars* films – your last chance to buy on video apparently, at least until the updated "new special effects" version of *A New Hope* surfaces in a few years' time – a roadshow is touring the UK featuring Darth Vader and Stormtroopers in full outfits and, most impressively, a full-size X-Wing, built in Germany with the help of Lucasfilm archivist Nelson Hall. The finished model is built on a steel frame, measures almost 30 feet in length, and looks absolutely brilliant. It featured at London's recent Live '95 electronics show, and is touring the country as you read this.

The three *Star Wars* films – now THX digitally remastered for improved picture quality, and available in both pan-and-scan and Widescreen formats – were released in mid-October, and will be reviewed next issue. Each comes with a special George Lucas interview about the film in question at the start of the tape, will be available as a three-movie boxed set from November, and is deleted in January '96. Fans won't be having problems thinking of a present this Xmas, then.

Putting together the new promotional X-Wing models for the current *Star Wars* video tour. These full size replicas are built around a steel chassis, enabling the X-Wing to be hung from the ceiling for display, as it was at the recent Live exhibition. Just pray you aren't standing underneath when the wires break...

been pushed back to sometime next year.

● **MEN IN BLACK** (Columbia/Amblin Entertainment) Dir Barry Sonnenfeld. Scr Ed Solomon. ExPrd Steven Spielberg. Prd Walter Parks, Laurie MacDonald. St Tommy Lee Jones. Based on the Malibu Comics characters *Jay and Kay,* drawn by Lawrence Cunningham. Will Smith has signed up to star too.

● **METROPOLIS** Not the sequel to *Blade Runner* (as some still erroneously insist), this is likely to be shot at Shepperton,

which is co-owned by director Ridley Scott.

● **MR STITCH** Dir/Scr Roger *(Pulp Fiction)* Avary. St Rutger Hauer, Wil Wheaton, Ron

Kurt Russell will reprise his role from *Escape from New York.*

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"Don't quote us!"

...Mully, and how they get to deal with the crap cases certain other agents can't be bothered with. One involves a close encounter of the third kind, where the aliens land in a farmyard and raid the house, just so they can use the toilet! The resulting ET dumps escape, and it's up to our intrepid heroes to find them before they can mate, *à la Species*. Yes, it's really as bad as it sounds, and you read it here first...

Someone, somewhere is putting the wheels in motion to bring, at long last, Frank Miller's classic comic story *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* to the big screen. Miller's tale of a 60 year old Batman coming out of retirement to fight "worse than thieves and murderers" will be brought to life with animation, reproducing his famous art style. But who will provide the voices for the various classic Batman characters? Might we hear a certain Mr Eastwood sparring with Jack Nicholson's Joker, perhaps?

Top secret things are afoot at Pinewood! Luc Besson's next flick, the follow-up to his hugely successful *Leon,* will be *The Fifth Parallel,* a fantasy epic that starts filming in January. Bruce Willis will arrive in England shortly after Christmas to perform leading man chores, where he'll be surrounded by a multitude of reptilian animatronics – some of which bear a striking similarity to the goombas out of *Super Mario Brothers*...

25 glorious years

Novacon 25: 2-5 November

Novacon, Britain's second oldest annual SF con, is now no longer in the shadow of Eastercon, and has developed into very much its own creature. **Steve Green** celebrates "fandom's dorm party," and looks forward to what 1996 has in store...

Harry Harrison, one of the Brum Group's honorary presidents, is one of four guests returning to Novacon for its silver jubilee.

Worse tortures awaited science fiction fans in the '60s than flared dungarees and Peter Wyngarde's sideburns in *Department S*, believe you me. Crazy as it sounds now – with the SF social calendar crammed with events covering all minutiae of the genre – fans back then had only the nomadic Eastercon to keep them going.

Come November '71, however, that changed for good. The folk we have to thank are Aston University's resident SF group, who hosted what was originally planned as a one-off complement to the Easter gathering. However, when nearly 150 fans turned up, the newly-reformed Birmingham SF Group saw they were onto something... Novacon swiftly became a permanent feature, a more intimate, conversational rendezvous than Eastercon, and placed just as much emphasis on the bar too. As fannish historian Peter Roberts once observed, the Novacon is best seen as three-day instalments in a neverending knees-up.

Iain (M) Banks – or "Banksie" to those in the know – is always good value as a guest, and may also visit the bar occasionally.

Nearly 25 years later, the event is still going strong, the "Brum Group" remains at the helm, and – but for a brief flirtation with Coventry in the mid-'80s – remains Birmingham's major SF event. Perhaps recalling the dips in membership which surround those years when Britain hosts the Worldcon, this year's committee has pulled out the big guns for 3-5 November, and recalled four of its past guests of honour: Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison (also the Brum Group's honorary presidents), Bob Shaw and Iain Banks. The venue, however, is new: The city's Chamberlain Hotel, sited on the former Birmingham doss house.

Perhaps Novacon's most endearing feature is the chance it gives fans, writers and artists to kick back and let loose. After all, where else are you likely to see Geoff Ryman impersonate the legendary warrior Gilgamesh or Rob Holdstock get pounced on by a strippergram?

For details of Novacon 25, send an SAE to: Carol Morton at Novacon (X), 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, DY9 8SS. Registration is £30.

Perlman, Nia Peeples, Teylor Negron. Two-hour pilot movie for a TV show filmed in France, with Hauer as a scientist who creates Wheaton – who then begins to experience memories from parts of his made-up body.

● **MUTANT CHRONICLES** Dir Stephen (Death Machine) Norrington. Scr Philip Eisner. Prd Ed Pressman. Based on the futuristic RPG in which a team of heroes have to save mankind. The $30 million movie will begin filming at Shepperton in January.

● **NEUROMANCER** (Alliance Communications/Phoenix) Prd Peter Hoffman, Staffan Ahrenberg. $50 million adaptation of William Gibson's cyberpunk novel.

● **OMNIVORE** (American World) Dir Mark Lester. Scr Dan O'Bannon. The *Alien* scripter's latest has prehistoric insects that take on the form of whatever they eat.

● **THE PHANTOM** (Robert Evans Co./Village Roadshow Pictures) After a long wait, director Simon Wincer should start shooting in November. Billy Zane and Treat Williams are in line to star.

● **PLANET OF THE APES** (20th Century Fox) Latest rumour has Chris Columbus as director of the Terry Hayes script. Columbus and his production company, 1492 Films, have a deal with Fox to do six films, which he was to produce only. Arnie is still attached to star.

● **THE PREACHER'S WIFE** (Disney/Samuel Goldwyn) Dir Penny Marshall. Prd Samuel Goldwyn Jr. St Denzel Washington, Whitney Houston, Lawrence Fishburne. Remake of the 1947 movie in which Cary Grant played an angel who comes down to Earth to help David Niven and Loretta Young raise money to build a church. Penny Marshall recently signed on as director.

The original, rather gruesome *Mars Attacks!* aliens will look *horrid* on film!

● **PREDATOR 3** (20th Century Fox) Prd John Davis. Fox added this to their slate not so long back, and it would appear that Robert Rodriguez – riding high on the success of *Desperado* and the expected success of the Tarantino-scripted *From Dusk Till Dawn* – will write and direct the story, which will involve a trip to the Predator's homeworld.

● **PRIME** (Universal) Universal has picked up the

The king is dead! (Long live the king!)

While Hollywood continually postpones its big Godzilla movie, those inscrutable gentlemen at Toho Corp. in Japan are preparing to release what could be the famous monster's final film. Rumours of the big guy's death are, however, greatly exaggerated, as our reporter **MJ Simpson** discovers...

Surely Godzilla is indestructible? He has appeared in 21 movies since his 1954 debut in *Gojira*, aka *Godzilla King of the Monsters*, and hasn't been defeated since. Rodan couldn't manage it. Nor could Mothra. Or Ghidorah. Or Mechagodzilla. Even King Kong only managed a draw! So what are these rumours of his impending demise all about? Are they, gulp, true?

Well, yes and no. Although he does indeed pop his clogs in his new opus, *Godzilla Vs Destroyer*, the film will not be his last. The original plan, apparently, had been for Godzilla to snuff it in *Godzilla Vs Mechagodzilla* (1993), to be replaced by a grown up version of Baby Godzilla, but this idea was soon quoshed by series executive producer Tomoyuki Tanaka.

That said, the idea for the new movie is a variation on that theme. When the Big G is defeated in *Godzilla Vs Destroyer* – by an updated version of the Oxygen Destroyer, which killed him in his debut in 1954 – his body will be vaporised and then absorbed by Baby Godzilla, who will morph into a new, slightly smaller Godzilla.

The Hollywood Godzilla script by Ted Elliot and Terry Rossio, however, is a different kettle of monster. According to reliable sources, Godzilla is accidentally revived after being found preserved in the Arctic Ice. An alien organo-mechanic structure is then discovered, containing a fluid which was keeping Big G in a coma. Meanwhile, an alien probe lands in a lake in Utah and mutates some cavebats...

***Gojira*, the Big G's first film, was called *Japan Battles the Terror of the Monster* in Spain. (Not many people know that.)**

Godzilla arrives in San Francisco and is subdued by using the fluid found in the Arctic. Meanwhile, the probe's genetic tinkering has manufactured a huge winged beast, the Gryphon. This monster flies across America to New York, where Godzilla has been transported for study. Godzilla is revived and the two beasties battle it out among the skyscrapers. Eventually, the Gryphon is defeated and Godzilla swims off out to sea.

Interesting stuff, but will the story and CGI effects prove as popular as the dodgy dubbing and men-in-rubber-suits of Toho's original *kaiju eiga*?

The X-Films

Long before Chris Carter spotted the power of the letter X, SF and horror film-makers knew that one titchy multiplication sign in the title of a movie could guarantee overnight success. Or possibly not. Here's a brief guide...

Dr X (1932)
Lionel Atwill stars as a scientist who develops a "synthetic skin" in this classic B-grade horror. Also stars Fay Wray.

The Return of Dr X (1939)
Humphrey Bogart as a reanimated corpse! This has no obvious connection with the previous film.

The Man From Planet X (1951)
Surprisingly good alien-lands-on-earth B-movie, filmed in six days, starring Robert *(Hideous Sun Demon)* Clarke.

X - The Unknown (1956)
Early Hammer flick in which an army training programme uncovers a highly radioactive mud creature. Excellent British pre-*Quatermass* SF.

The Strange World of Planet X (1957)
More interesting Brit-SF, with cosmic rays helping to create some giant insects. Based on a TV serial by René Ray.

X: The Man With X-Ray Eyes (1963)
Roger Corman-directed SF thriller, in which Ray Milland has the power to see through girl's dresses – but, oddly enough, not their underwear.

Invasion of Planet X (1965)
Fifth Godzilla movie from Toho Film Corp., and the first in which he was the good guy. Here, the Big G and Rodan join forces to defend Earth against the three-headed "alien" dragon Ghidorah.

The X from Outer Space (1967)
Non-Toho Japanese monster movie. The "X" is Guilala, a creature generated from outer-space gunk that sticks to a rocket-ship.

Project X (1967)
William Castle directed this unusual piece of SF, set in 2118, in which a returning secret agent is brainwashed and given the identity of a 1968 bank robber. Like, wow.

Project X (1987)
Matthew Broderick stars in this crap movie about youngsters liberating chimps from a space-flight simulation.

Malcolm X (1992)
Sort of a cross between *Brother from Another Planet* and *Revolt in 2100. (Right, that's enough X-films – Ed.)*

rights to the Malibu Comics strip about a young boy, Kevin Green, who morphs into the superhero Prime, while retaining the outlook of a 13-year-old. John *(The Hulk)* Turman is to script.

● **THE PROPHECY** Dir/Scr Gregory Widen. St Christopher Walken, Elias Koteas. Angels battle bad guys on Earth. Widen wrote the screenplay of the original *Highlander* movie, but may find it hard trying to get his directorial debut drumming up business in America's South...

● **THE PUNISHER** After many rumours of big-screen stardom, the latest gossip has *The Punisher* being promoted as a possible TV project via Alpha Productions for NBC.

● **REALLY BIG BUGS** Another one for bug lovers, coming in the wake of *Starship Troopers* and *Invasion Earth*. Adam Rifkin (recently fired from *Barb Wire*) is lined up to direct.

● **SHE-HULK** (CBS) The green goddess just refuses to lay down. There was a long drawn-out attempt to star Brigitte *(Galaxis, Mrs Stallone)* Nielsen in this film, but now the rights have gone straight to CBS for a telemovie and series, which was originally going to be produced by Oliver Stone. He has since dropped out, however, leaving producers Don Murphy and Jane Hamsher (both of *Natural Born Killers)* to go it alone. Michael Cassutt and Harley Peyton will script the pilot.

● **SHOCKWAVE** (Live Entertainment) Dir David Twohy. St Charlie Sheen, Ron Silver, Lindsay Crouse. An astronomer discovers aliens have invaded the Earth. The film was at first with Disney, but went into turnaround, and Twohy – one of Hollywood's busiest scriptwriters recently – fielded offers from Fox and Warners before going with independents Live in return for more independence. The budget is now set at $25 million.

● **SPACE TRUCKERS** (The Spice Factory) Dir Stuart Gordon. Scr Ted Mann. ExPrd Greg Johnson, Guy Collins. Prd Stuart Gordon, Peter *(Smoke, Blue in the Face)* Newman, Ted Mann, Morgan O'Sullivan. St Dennis Hooper, Stephen Dorff, Debi Mazar, George Wendt, Ron House, Van Morrison. Budgeted at $23 million, this space comedy has not had an easy time of it. Due to shoot in Ireland, there was a series of financial problems shortly before production began when one of the co-producers failed to come up with the money. Hasty financial restructuring followed, and the film started on time on 11 September.

● **STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS** Pre-pre-production work on the *Star Wars* prequels is well under way, with conceptual artwork now in the hands of Industrial Light and Magic, who will begin work on digital effects long before the Summer 1996 pre-production kick-off date.

Babylon (and on)...

JM Straczynski reveals more from *Babylon 5's* third season...

Jim Swallow reports on new characters, new spaceships and the return of Sinclair in the middle season of this five-year saga.

Season three of *Babylon 5* is set to up the intensity of its "grand saga," with executive producer JM Straczynski revealing how at the recent Wolf 359 convention in Manchester. Want to know (at least some of) what's coming up? Read on!

First off, there are changes afoot out on the Rim of Known Space, and Babylon 5 is at the vanguard. The third season will introduce a new recurring character to replace the missing Star Fury pilot Lieutenant Keffer. Marcus Cole (played by British actor Jason Carter) is a Ranger, one of the "agents of the light" cultivated by former commander Sinclair. Cole's mission on Babylon 5 is secretive, initially known only to Delenn, but as the season draws on his role will become more pivotal...

Sinclair himself will also return in a special two-part story, which will answer some of the questions raised about B5's sister station, B4, its time-travelling destiny and the alien Zathras, seen in "Babylon Squared."

A typical confrontation between Londo (left) and G'Kar (right) from season two.

New developments in the Centauri-Narn war will put more pressure on Londo (left).

Babylon 5 will also gain a starship escort called The White Star. Built by the Minbari, and utilising Vorlon technology, The White Star will be based at the station and travel off on important missions.

The Shadows will be back in force. Their agent, Mr Morden, will return to collect his masters' debt from an unwilling Londo. With the Narn subjugated under the Centauri dictatorship, G'Kar will be replaced by a Narn "sympathetic" to the new government.

G'Kar's guerrilla war against the Centauri will cross over with concerns about the Shadows. After the stance taken by B5 at the end of "The Fall of Night," the station's neutral status will be challenged, leading to insurrection and a stand-off with Earthforce vessels!

Ron Thornton promises more outstanding effects, including more virtual sets and new ships like The White Star and a Star Fury deluxe. The seeds for Straczynski's *B5* spin-off will be planted in this season too, although it will be put on hold until the main series has completed its run.

Channel 4's agreement to buy season three of *B5* has been secured, but it's unclear whether they'll pick up the Widescreen version, as JMS wishes, or when it will be shown – probably the latter half of '96.

Terry on tour!

Terry Pratchett's tour itinerary for November...

To celebrate the launch of new Discworld merchandise, Terry Pratchett will be doing a book-signing tour as follows:

2 Nov	
12.30pm	Waterstones, Leadenhall Market London
5.30pm	Books, Etc, Charing Cross Road, London
3 Nov	
12 noon	James Thin, Inverness
5pm	Dillons, Aberdeen
4 Nov	
10.30am	James Thin, Dundee
2.30pm	John Menzies, Perth
8 Nov	
12.30pm	WH Smith, Liverpool
5pm	Waterstones, Deansgate, Manchester
9 Nov	
12 noon	Hatchards, Chester
5pm	Waterstones, Birmingham
10 Nov	
12.30pm	Hammicks, Leamington Spa
4.30pm	Volume One, Northampton
11 Nov	
11am	Heffers Booksellers, Trinity Street, Cambridge
3.30pm	Red Lion Books, Colchester
15 Nov	
12 noon	Ottakars, Newport, IoW
4.15pm	WH Smith, Portsmouth
16 Nov	
12.30pm	Dillons, Crawley
4.30pm	Volume One, Basingstoke
17 Nov	
12.30pm	WH Smith, Slough
5pm	Dillons, Gower Street, London
18 Nov	
11am	Dillons, Oxford
3.15pm	Ottakars, Banbury
21 Nov	
12.15pm	Waterstones, Watford
23 Nov	
4.30pm	Hammicks, Andover
25 Nov	
1pm	Forbidden Planet, London

A 13 year old in a superhuman's body: That's *Prime*.

● **STARSHIP TROOPERS** (TriStar) Dir Paul Verhoeven. Scr Ed Neumeier. Prd Jon Davison, Alan Marshall. The *RoboCop* team adapt Robert A Heinlein's classic novel of a military team assembled to travel to the home world of giant insects that are invading Earth. At one time, things weren't going well, with TriStar nervously watching Kevin Costner's *Waterworld* to gauge the popularity of SF. But with the latter now doing okay, and Verhoeven high in the public eye, thanks to the lap-dancing antics of *Showgirls*, the project's been given a green light and a $90 million budget. Should begin shooting in March or April of '96, with a Memorial Day 1997 release already pencilled in.

● **20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA** A new version of Jules Verne's classic story about the cranky Nemo and his fabulous submarine is being scripted by ex-*Superman* penpusher David Newman.

● **VAMPIRE CULT QUEENS FROM HELL** (Killer Pix) Dir P David Ebersole. Scr Mary Woronov. Prd Maricel Pagulayan. St Barbara Steele, Mary Woronov, Martine Beswick, Paul Witten. Scream queen flick due to begin shooting in January. This is *not* a joke.

● **WHEN HEROES GO DOWN** Scr Gregg Chabot, Kevin Peterka. Prd Richard & Lili Zanuck. The scriptwriters are graduates fresh out of New York University. The film is set in 2020, and has a fire-fighting team battling a clutch of dragons. They'd better know what they're doing then...

● **WING COMMANDER: THE MOVIE** Dir Chris Roberts. It had to happen. The movie of the best-selling game should hit the screen in the Summer of '97.

● **THE X-FILES** Although there has been a great deal of speculation about a spin-off big screen version of the cult series, there are still plenty of obstacles to overcome, not the least of which is that David Duchovny doesn't want his first starring role to be as Fox Mulder, for fear of typecasting. The fact it would have to be shot between seasons, thus giving the actors no rest, is a problem too. And is it too early for a film anyway?

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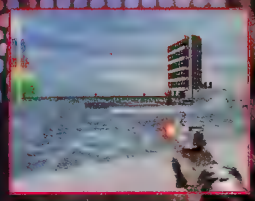

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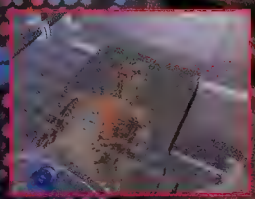

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RAY HARRYHAUSEN

BEFORE JURASSIC PARK AND COMPUTERS, THERE WAS ONE MILLION YEARS BC – AND RAY HARRYHAUSEN. FOR OVER 30 YEARS, IF YOU WANTED BIG MONSTERS IN YOUR MOVIES, RAY – THE MASTER OF STOP-MOTION ANIMATION – WAS YOUR MAN. **DAVE GOLDER** TALKS TO THE FAMOUS ANIMATOR ABOUT MONSTERS, MAGIC – AND SKELETONS...

Some film-makers make their name by having a signature movie-making style – the "Hitchcockian" twist, for example, or the "Wellesian" camera angle. But none of these are as recognisable as the stop-motion monsters made famous by Mr Ray Harryhausen. Long ago – before computers ruled the Earth – creature features usually relied on men in suits, or optically enlarged reptiles. Harryhausen films, however, were different. And better. Movies like *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms, The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* and *Jason and the Argonauts* used stop-motion animation instead, a process whereby the model would be shot frame by frame, with the animator moving the subject only slightly between each shot. The end result, when the film was run at normal speed, gave the impression that the model was actually moving. It was a slow, laborious process, but the technique provided the best in special effects for most of the century, and still look breathtakingly impressive today. If any one man could be called the master of the technique, it's Ray Harryhausen.

Harryhausen was born in 1920, and at the age of 13 saw the film that changed his life – *King Kong*. Too young to get excited about Fay Wray, it was her hairy co-star that really impressed him, and almost immediately he started experimenting with 3D animation. By the mid '40s his efforts paid off when he was invited by the man who did the effects on *Kong*, Willis O'Brien, to work with him on the film that became *Mighty Joe Young*. And so began a 32-year, 16 movie career. Ray Harryhausen retired in 1981, after completing one of his most ambitious films, *Clash of the Titans*, and has spent much of the time since attending film festivals, talking about his work and casting impressively intricate bronze figures.

SFX caught up with him recently in London, as he enthusiastically set out on a PR tour of duty for video re-releases of *Clash of the Titans, One Million Years BC* and *The Valley of Gwangi* on the Warner Bros label, and discovered a thoughtful, committed film-maker with a cinematic vision seemingly somewhat at odds with today's...

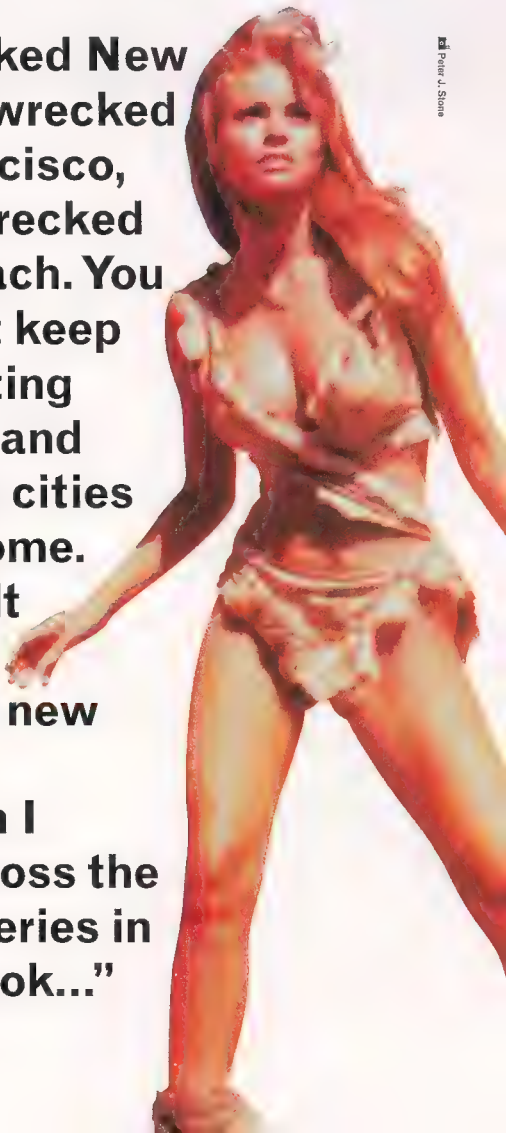
The legend goes that it was watching *King Kong* that sparked your interested in animation...

"I saw *King Kong* when I was 13, and I haven't been the same since."

Did you know what "stop-motion animation" was when you first saw it?

"Not really. I knew *Kong* was a picture about a gorilla because of the advertisements and the posters, but at the time there were a lot of

"I'd wrecked New York, I'd wrecked San Francisco, and I'd wrecked Long Beach. You just can't keep on repeating yourself, and wrecking cities got tiresome. So we felt that we needed a new subject, and when I came across the Sinbad series in an old book..."


Peter J. Stone

The mighty Triceratops versus Ceratosaurus battle in *One Million Years BC* replaced the dodgy-looking optically-enlarged alligator-iguana slug-out of the 1935 original.

gorilla pictures about, like *White Congo*, where the gorillas came into African villages and carried women off into the jungle. And they'd got very clichéd. But then I went into see *King Kong*, and it was so different – it led you by the hand very cleverly from the mundane world into the most outrageous fantasy that has ever been put on the screen..."

And it still impresses today...

"Oh yes, it does! We went to the Berlin film festival about four years ago, and they ran the old *King Kong* – a new print of it, with restored scenes. There were 1,000 people there, and you know the people who go to these film festivals are pretty jaded – they've seen everything. But the audience loved it. There was spontaneous applause at the end. For a 60 year old picture that's not bad."

So having seen *King Kong*, how did you know that special effects was the career for you?

"I knew *King Kong* wasn't a man in a suit. And, of course, the dinosaurs fascinated me – most young boys, and girls sometimes, love dinosaurs at a certain age. They are such a fantasy creature. And so I made it my business to try to find out how the film was made. Finally, an article came out in *Look* magazine showing Fay Wray shaking hands with the King Kong model – and she was towering over it. That's how I learnt all about stop-motion.

"Then I got interested in photography, and took courses in art direction and film editing at USC. I started building my models as a hobby when I was still in High School, and eventually got a 16mm camera and started experimenting with stop-motion. Gradually, over the years, it grew from a hobby into a profession."

So how did you actually break into films?

"I had the great pleasure of working with Willis O'Brien on *Mighty Joe Young*. That was my first feature film, although I had worked with George Pal previously on the *Puppetoons* for Paramount. They were short films which used very stylised figures, but they never quite caught on like *Tom and Jerry*. They weren't violent enough, I suppose.

"After that, I worked in the army, then left and produced some of my own animated fairy tales. Then Obie (O'Brien) decided to make another gorilla picture, and it turned out to be *Mighty Joe Young*. I became Willis O'Brien's assistant because I had kept in touch with him throughout the war, and he'd seen some of my work."

***Mighty Joe Young* is very different to *King Kong*, very tongue in cheek...**

"Do you like it?"

***One Million Years BC* actors Raquel Welch and John Richardson had few problems learning their lines – after all, the thin script consisted entirely of grunts and made-up words.**

Personally, I think it's great, but there's no way it compares with *Kong*.

"It's good fun, but it didn't have the same impact as *Kong*, sure. It was a great pleasure to work on. I worked three years on it with Willis O'Brien – John Ford made three or four pictures while we were making just one!"

The first film you did where you had control over the effects was *Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*. How did you land that?

"I had a friend who had the script, but the producers didn't know how to do the Beast – should it be a man in a suit, or an alligator dressed up, or what? But they had the outline of a script, and I helped work on it.

"It was a very low budget picture. You see, after *Mighty Joe Young*, a rumour had gone around Hollywood that it cost so much that nobody wanted to know about it. RKO was going through a period when Howard Hughes bought the studio, and *Joe Young* was the only picture there for three years, apart from that lust in the dust thing... Oh, what was it? With Jane Russell. *(The Outlaw – Ed.)* That was the only other picture shooting, so they dumped the overheads of all the heads of departments at RKO on our budget. They had nothing to do with us, and it made our picture look like it cost twice as much as it did. So this rumour got around that animation was very expensive, and nobody would touch it.

"That's why I had to go in the opposite direction, and try to make subsequent pictures on a very low budget. We made the whole of *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* for $200,000. You can't even buy a costume for that now! And it looked lavish. Warner Bros bought it, rescored it and made a fortune. It made three, four or maybe five million dollars."

When did you meet your collaborator, producer Charles H Schneer?

"After *Beast*, through an army friend. He was making second feature films for Columbia, and I heard he wanted to pull down the San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge with a giant octopus, and that sounded rather intriguing. So I went to see him... We made 12 pictures together."

Why do you think you two hit it off so well?

"He liked fantasy films, and kept the costs of the production down, and me, being a one-man show, kept the animation costs down too. They all turned out to be very low budget pictures, but they look much more lavish than they were."

What about *Jason and the Argonauts*? That must've had a bigger budget?

"It cost about one million dollars, which was nothing. That was still a low budget for the '60s. They were spending between $3-5 million on films at the time."

Was it difficult trying to find subjects to film?

"It certainly was, because the Dynamation medium is so different to a cartoon. That's why we invented the name Dynamation, because the

Raquel Welch was possibly the only actor in a Harryhausen film to ever manage to upstage the monsters. (Cue some appallingly sexist joke about a couple of monsters of her own...)

"I was involved right at the beginning, at the script stage – even though many times I didn't get a credit. I mean, I originated *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*, but I never got a credit – I never demanded it. I was an idiot, I suppose. Today you would get a fantastic amount of money for bringing a novel idea like that into being."

critics and the journalists would describe ours as 'animated' films, so everybody thought they were cartoons. We had to try and get a new name which would distinguish this particular type of film from cartoons."

Do you remember the first time you used the term?

"In *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*. I had used the same techniques in earlier film, but *The Seventh Voyage* was the first one we pushed forward as a new process."

It changed its name a number of times over the years – Superdynamation, Dynarama... Was there actually any difference?

"Well, yes. We were always improving the processes we used, both in terms of combining the images and reproducing movement."

***The Seventh Voyage* is also the film that defined the kind of movie you're most associated with – the legendary epic.**

"We tried to get away from constantly wrecking cities. I'd wrecked New York, I'd wrecked San Francisco, and I'd wrecked Long Beach. You just can't keep on repeating yourself, and wrecking cities got kind of tiresome. So we felt that we needed a new subject. I came across the Sinbad series in an old story book, and thought, 'They've never used these for a fantasy film before.' So I did eight big drawings and peddled them all over Hollywood. Nobody was interested.

"I filed the drawings away until I had made about three films with Charles Schneer. Then I hauled them out when we were looking for a new subject, and he got excited. I had to rethink it, though, because it was going to be a very high budget picture – I wanted to make it very lavish, like Korda's *Thief of Baghdad*, but for a reasonable price."

It doesn't look cheap...

"It still looks very expensive, and it only cost $650,000."

Was it an instant hit?

"It was quite a success, because it was so different. And we had the

The Kraken from Harryhausen's final epic, *Clash of the Colour Schemes* (sorry, *Titans*), was the offspring of a prehistoric reptile that mated with one of the Titans. Apparently.

great privilege of having Bernard *(Psycho)* Herrmann scoring it, which really boosted it into classical proportions. Music is very necessary in fantasy films, because they're essentially pantomime. These films aren't based on dialogue, but on visuals, so you need to boost the audio to give it that bigger-than-life quality."

And it spawned some instant imitators…

"*Jack the Giant Killer* came out after *The Seventh Voyage*, and it was a direct copy. They even took the same star (Kerwin Mathews) and director (Nathan Juran). That's because Mr Small *(producer Edward Small – Ed)* turned down *The Seventh Voyage*. And his picture cost three times what our picture cost, and it didn't make a penny."

Whenever you read reviews of your films, critics will invariably put something like, "but Harryhausen's effects are a highlight" – whether they actually liked the film or not. Did you feel safe in the knowledge that, no matter how bad the film was, you would always come out okay?

"Well, I don't think we ever made a *really* bad movie. We may have made a film where the subject matter wasn't everybody's cup of tea, but I wouldn't say we made a bad film. It becomes a matter of opinion. A lot of people don't have the imagination or knowledge to follow a Greek myth.

"We had one journalist in America who complained about the actors in *Clash*. And here we had the world's greatest actor, Laurence Olivier, and this journalist said he looked like a tired old man in a nightgown. That proves he didn't know a damned thing about Greek mythology. Maybe he was bilious when he saw the picture, so he wrote a nasty review of it. But most people who saw *Clash of the Titans* and know a bit about Greek mythology understood that it was quite an unusual and very classy film."

But it's not as simple as that, surely? Don't you think that someone could love *Jason and the Argonauts*, but not like *Eye of the Tiger*?

"Don't you like *Eye of the Tiger*?"

I thought the creatures, like the walrus and the wasp, weren't as exciting as usual – apart from the Minoton, but he came to a disappointing end, crushed by a rock.

"Yes, he should have gone out fighting. Ah well, you can't please everybody. Some films did work better than others."

In a way your films were a gift to film critics in the same way that Gerry Anderson's shows were a gift to TV critics. In both cases they can wheel out the same old jokes about the acting…

"I've even had journalists say, 'Mr Harryhausen should have animated the actors as well.' Of course, that makes the actors furious! A lot of actors have turned down parts in my pictures because they felt the special effects stole the film. What was that old-fashioned idea? Actors' agents would

***Clash* was the second Harryhausen film based on Greek myths (after *Jason and the Argonauts*). This time round the script was (very) loosely based on the story of Perseus.**

say, if there's a baby or a dog in the picture don't take the part. Now it's if there's a baby, a dog *or* special effects..."

How do you decide what monsters are going to be used in the films?

"Well, you try to stick to the legends as much as possible."

That's not the way it looks...

"Well, the legends are very fragmented. You don't have in Greek mythology, or Arabic mythology, an actual continuity that is suitable for films. So you have to manipulate things, and steal from one legend and put it in another, to build a beginning, a middle and an end. You have to modify it to take advantage of what the film medium has to offer. It's not that we feel we're better writers than Plato, just a question of making a suitable film that will attract the public."

There must have times when you'd think, "that worked well – let's do it bigger and better next time." I'm thinking of things like the single skeleton in *The Seventh Voyage* that became several in *Jason and the Argonauts*...

"Well, that wasn't quite the psychology, although on the surface that's what one could assume. But, you know, in Britain we got an X-certificate just for one skeleton. We should have got seven X-certificates for *Jason!*"

An X-certificate?

"They cut the whole skeleton sequence in England. There's a print at the BFI where the skeleton sequence and a lot of the Cyclops roasting the man on a spit is cut out. There's just a big hole."

I bet you didn't think you were making a horror film...

"No! Everybody's got a skeleton inside of them, but the BBFC thought that the skeleton frightened children. So it just became another picture for kids, which is a shame. In America it was a film for the whole family."

And children love being scared...

"Most children do. You look at the history of fairy tales, and all of them are really gory. *Little Red Riding Hood* is terribly lewd as well."

The argument tends to be that as long as the horrors are obviously not of this world children can handle them...

"But film is such a potent medium. That's the danger in much of today's films – these kids grow up seeing that everything has to be settled by violence. This box [points to a TV set] brainwashes you into thinking everything has to be settled by violence. Hitler knew it. How could you brainwash an intellectual society – like Germany, say – into becoming barbarians, except by making propaganda films?"

Your next movie, *The Three Worlds of Gulliver*, was a different affair...

"There's a minimum of animation, but most people like it. What happened

Pegasus, the winged horse from *Clash of the Titans*, galloped as he flew for no other reason than, as Harryhausen admits, it didn't look quite right with his legs just hanging there.

"A lot of fans write to me and say, 'We've got the laserdisc, and we can stop it and see all the matte lines,' but these films were never made to be analysed with a microscope, and most of them won't stand up to it."

was somebody came to us with the script that they'd developed at Universal, and we switched it around so that we could use Dynamation. That's one of the reasons we came to England – to use the yellow backing process at the Rank laboratories. We had 350 or 400 travelling mattes in *Gulliver*, and they didn't do many travelling mattes in America – they used mostly rear projection. And so we decided to make our headquarters here for that particular movie."

You did a number of films in Britain after that.

"Yes, we decided to stay here because it was so close to all those wonderful locations. You can't keep using Malibu Beach and the Grand Canyon. Television uses up locations in America like loo paper.

"We went to very exotic locations because, in fantasy films, you rely on unusual scenery. We went to places like Jordan to photograph Petra (for *Eye of the Tiger*), and in *Clash* we went to a place in Spain where the rocks are different to anything you've ever seen."

Eventually you were getting co-producer credits on your films, but presumably you'd done more than just the effects all along?

"The title of effects supervisor was a bit of a misnomer. The type of pictures we made were not directors' pictures, or writers' pictures. They depended so much on the visuals. So I was involved right at the beginning, at the script stage – even though many times I didn't get a credit. I mean, I originated *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*, but I never got a credit – I never demanded it. I was an idiot at the time, I suppose. Today you would get a fantastic amount of money for bringing a novel idea like that into being.

"I was usually involved right at the beginning, by choosing the subject. Somebody brought Charles the script of *Gulliver*, so that was different. *Mysterious Island* was a script that Columbia had developed earlier, but then shelved, and after a while they gave it to Charles to see what he could do with it. He then gave it to me.

"The script went through many changes. It started off as an island with prehistoric animals. Then it became enlarged animals. The bird was supposed to be a prehistoric bird, a Phororhacos, but it was a hangover from a previous film. Everybody seemed to think it was a big chicken."

Moving onto *Jason and the Argonauts*, I notice that in the *Time Out Film Guide* Telos is described as "an arthritic disappointment..."

"Ha, ha, ha! I deliberately tried to make him stiff and mechanical-like!"

But *Jason* includes some of your most accomplished sequences. Aside from Telos, there's also the battle with the seven skeletons...

"That was a tricky one, not least because you have to ask yourself how do you kill death? It sounds ridiculous, but you have to think about

The ancient temples in Paestum, Italy, provided the location for the Harpies sequence from *Jason and the Argonauts*. Originally, designers were going to build a temple in the studio.

these things when you're doing a sequence like that. In the original legend they were rotting corpses, which would have been rather repulsive. At that time, unlike today, the repulsive wasn't very popular. But today the more repulsive you get, the more popular the picture becomes. It's quite remarkable the change of taste. This is an age where we worship the ugly and the vile. All you have to do is tell people that someone gets their head mashed in a movie and everybody wants to go and see it. It's a sad state of affairs when you have to watch sadistic things to be entertained – it desensitizes enormously."

How complicated was the skeleton scene to achieve?

"It was one of the longest sequences I've ever done. We averaged only 13-15 frames a day for a couple of weeks, and it took over four and a half months to do the whole sequence."

Is that a lot longer than usual?

"Oh yes – it was only a five-minute sequence. There was just so much synchronisation to achieve."

A scene like that must have been really bizarre for the actors. Did any of them ever have real problems reacting to effects that weren't there yet?

"No. Actors are all professional people – a leading man might sometimes have to make love to a teapot if his leading lady goes home, and he's stuck with his close-up! So they have to have an imagination. I used to make these big drawings to show them what's happening in the script, as well as maybe 400 simple pen and ink sketches to show the continuity. These are all put in the script so the actors can see the type of things they're supposed to be looking at, when actually on set there's just a big pole there. We say, 'Look up at the top of the pole. Look horrified,' and they do. Then I take the pole out and put the creatures in."

So, let's take the lasso scene in *The Valley of Gwangi*, for example. What

"We averaged only 13-15 frames a day for a couple of weeks, and it took over four and a half months to do the entire sequence."

On that skelly scene in *Jason and the Argonauts*

"One of the problems we always had with skeletons," explains Harryhausen, "is working out how to kill death." In *Jason* they end up taking a 90-foot plunge over a cliff into the sea.

was actually there for the actors to react to? I assume they didn't just run around looking into thin air *all* the time...

"We had a jeep with a pole on it the height of Gwangi. They lassoed the pole, and then the jeep would pull on the horses so that the horses looked like they were straining against something. Then I blotted out the jeep and put the dinosaur where the jeep was."

What about segments where, say, an actor will throw a spear, and then the spear leaves his hand and bounces off a creature – like in *One Million Years BC*, for instance?

"It has to be carefully thought out. The real spear actually goes behind the animal, but as it gets close to the image of the monster, you substitute a miniature spear. It has to be done very carefully, and planned out well."

Do you ever get worried by people who'll buy a laserdisc, then watch things like that frame-by-frame to see if they can spot the join?

"Well, yes – these films were made to be seen once or twice. I have a lot of fans who write to me and say, 'We've got the laserdisc, and we can stop it and see all the matte lines,' but these films were never made to be analysed with a microscope, and most of them won't stand up to it. Some dedicated fans analyse it out of existence. They go over and over everything, and eventually see a pair of pliers on the set!"

So is there a stray pair of pliers in one of your films, then?

"Maybe. There've certainly been a lot of scenes I would have liked to have shot over again, but we didn't have time. Most of what you see is the first take. We had 5% retakes, maybe."

So if there was one sequence you'd like to be able to go back and do again, which one would it be?

"Ha, ha, ha! There are so many it's hard to say, but I'd certainly have liked to do the scorpion sequence in *Clash* again in a different way. The problem was we had to shoot the background plates in the rain, and it wasn't very satisfactory. But somehow we got away with it."

Going back to *One Million Years BC*, presumably this was another film where you didn't originate the script idea?

"That's right. Did you ever see the original film? The Victor Mature one called *A Man and His Mate*? Well they had a man in a dinosaur suit in that. You can imagine how ludicrous it looked – they had to hide him behind a bush because it was so embarrassing to look at. So, when Hammer came to me and said, 'We want to remake this film, would you be interested?', I took it on because I felt I could improve on the old one."

Not much of a challenge, surely?

"Well, no."

Didn't you feel it was a bit of a shame, though, that the first monster you get to see in *One Million Years BC* isn't animated, but just an optically enlarged lizard?

"We had a jeep with a pole on it... They lassoed the pole, and then the jeep would pull on the horses so that they looked like they were straining against something. Then I blotted out the jeep and put the dinosaur in..."

"At the time there was a psychology behind that which I have to take the blame for. I felt that if you saw a real lizard first you would probably accept the animated lizards more readily. But most people criticised the real one for not doing anything. All he did was blink his eyes. We had trouble even making him walk; he just fell asleep under the lights."

Are there any types of dinosaur you never did that you wished you'd had the chance to animate?

"Well, we had a sequence pulled out of *One Million Years BC* where the brontosaurus raided the village – I would have liked to have done that."

It was Hammer's 100th film, wasn't it?

"Yes. They put a little more money into it. But not enough to keep the Brontosaurus scene, unfortunately."

Didn't you find it annoying, as a dinosaur fan, that the whole film was based on a misconception – that dinosaurs lived at the same time as man?

"But that's a theatrical thing. I don't find that repulsive because we're not making these films for palaeontologists. We're making them to entertain the public. And this is a Never, Never Land, another 'What if?'" situation. It hasn't been proven, anyhow, that man didn't live alongside the dinosaurs. The last report on the TV said they had found homo erectus – he looked like an ape, and walked erect – and he lived four million years ago, so I don't think anyone has the right to criticise us on that basis. Anyway, there would be no drama if you didn't have men fighting dinosaurs. You can't just show a bunch of dinosaurs roaming around – you'd have no film."

On a film like that, how much contact do you have with the actors? I'm thinking specifically, of course, about Raquel Welch...

"Ha, ha! Well, we have to work together when she's in a film that involves my work. I directed those sections of the picture."

So you'd direct all the sequences that involved animated effects?

"Usually, although sometimes I'd work with the director on those scenes. But often I'd do it on my own as a second unit. It varies a great deal. These aren't 'directors' pictures,' because, by their very nature, they have to be planned out before the director ever comes onto the project."

***The Valley of Gwangi* was a movie initiated by your old mentor and**

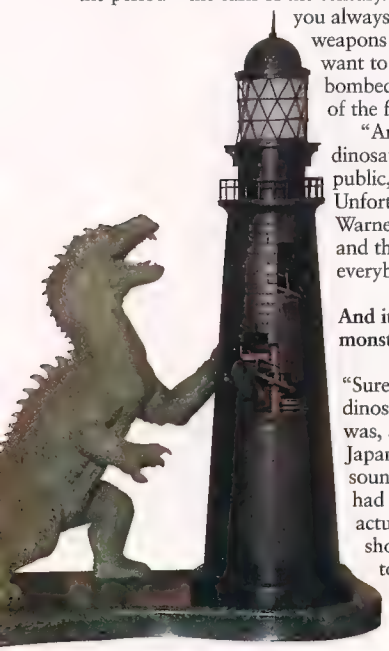
***The Valley of Gwangi* was originally a '30s project, with effects by Harryhausen's mentor Willis *(King Kong)* O'Brien, but was shelved after studio fears about the cost of the effects.**

The Medusa sequence from *Clash of the Titans* is undoubtedly one of Harryhausen's finest moments, the perfect combination of good design, smooth animation and moody lighting.

close friend Willis O'Brien, wasn't it? Can you tell us more about how that one came about?

"Wally started making *Gwangi* in 1941 at RKO, but unfortunately the war came along and it never got made. Obie gave me the script and years later, when Charles and I were looking for a project, we thought we would try to revive it. We changed some of it, but basically it was the same. We altered parts of it that we felt were a little dated, but we tried to keep it in the period – the turn of the century. When you bring something up to date you always run into the problem of modern-day weapons and atomic bombs, which we didn't want to have in there – they could have just bombed Gwangi and that would be the end of the film.

"Anyway, we thought, 'cowboys and dinosaurs – both of them are attractive to the public,' so there was no need to update it. Unfortunately, it got a lousy release through Warner Bros, who had just changed hands, and the picture didn't do very well. But everybody that sees it likes it."



And it certainly contains some classic monster scenes...

"Sure. How many people have ever seen a dinosaur being lassoed before? The trouble was, a lot of people thought it was a Japanese film because of the title – it sounded like *Rodan* or *Godzilla*. Nobody had heard the word *Gwangi* before. It's actually an Indian word, and Warners should really have had a clever campaign to explain it to the public. But, unfortunately, like I said, they dropped it on the market like a B-picture. It had a good cast, and the script was very competent. It wasn't one of our best pictures, but it was entertaining."

If it was released now, they'd probably play up on the Japanese angle...

"Well, the Japanese copied *Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* and came up with *Godzilla*. *Godzilla* was practically a carbon copy."

After returning to the Sinbad movies with *The Golden Voyage* and *The Eye of the Tiger*, you started work on *Clash of the Titans*, a much more grandiose project.

"We had more money to work with, so we tried to make it a spectacle, although most of the money went on the actors. When you're dealing with Zeus you really need someone like Laurence Olivier to play it. Though he was quite ill when he did it, he still had a lot of power. Very few people can play parts like that – you can't have James Cagney as God. It was a joke, even, to see Edward G Robinson in a toga *(In* The Ten Commandments – *Ed.)*."

Is it true that *Clash of the Titans* was the first time you worked with other animators on a film...

"Yes, the workload was so much greater, so I brought in Jim Danforth and Steve Archer to help me."

How was the work divided? Did you each do certain creatures?

"It didn't work like that. I've read that Bubo's was Steve's, I did the Medusa, and so on, but it wasn't that simple. I had a hand in the animation of nearly all the creatures, but there were times when I had to move on to do something else and left the animation to the others. There were no strict boundaries, although Steve did concentrate on Bubo."

So was the metal owl Bubo your answer to R2D2?

(Tutting) "You make a metallic bird that clicks, and everyone accuses you

of ripping off R2D2! No, Bubo wasn't our answer to *Star Wars*. He was in the original legend. He wasn't metal in the legend, admittedly – we did that to make him more interesting for our film."

Clash of the Titans was criticised for using old-fashioned special effects techniques at a time when films like _The Empire Strikes Back_ were making these huge advances...

"You mean we didn't use computers?"

Er...

"I remember when go-motion was all the rage, right after *The Empire Strikes Back* had come out. Suddenly, I was getting interviewed all the time by people who wanted to know why I didn't use go-motion. Go-motion was the answer to everything. It's the same with computers today. They have their place, and they offer great opportunities, and today's effects rely on them. But you can't give yourself over to them – and, certainly, at the time of *Clash*, they weren't the be-all-and-end-all."

It's been suggested that you retired after _Clash_ because technology was leaving you behind...

"Ha! I retired for a number of different reasons, but I'm sure if I were making films today I would use computers."

So when you were working on _Clash_, did you know it was going to be your last film?

"Absolutely not. Well, not until the latter part of it..."

Were there ever plans to make anything after _Clash_?

"Oh yes. There was all kinds of talk, but nothing of a definite nature. *The Trojans*, which was based on the Trojan Horse myth, was in development, but I wasn't going to be directly connected to it."

Were you to be there in an advisory capacity?

"More or less, yes."

So what happened during the making of _Clash_ that convinced you not to make another movie?

"Oh, there were many different things. Number one: I got tired of being stuck in a darkened room working on one picture while everybody else went out and made two or three. That became something of a discouragement. And also, the type of pictures that seemed to be popular weren't particularly my cup of tea. You can't start a Sinbad movie with an explosion like you can with a futuristic movie."

In the past you've mentioned that you're not keen on the way films are made these days, with specialised effect people each doing their own specific job, everyone a small cog in a large machine...

"That's correct, yes. About 80 people doing what I used to do by myself!"

Any regrets?

"My main regret – well, not regret, that's too strong a word – is that we didn't get *War of the Worlds* to the screen."

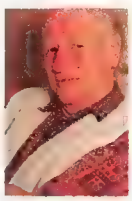
***War of the Worlds*? Nothing to do with George Pal's version, presumably?**

"I was working on it before George's version came out, and unlike his, it would have taken place in the setting of the book – Victorian London. The war machines would have had three legs, too, while the top parts would have been animated like the saucers in *Earth Versus the Flying Saucers*, to make it look they were a kind of gyroscope affair, keeping the Martians balanced. Unfortunately, it never got beyond the pre-production stage."

One last question: Have you seen _Jurassic Park_? What did you think of it?

"I was very impressed. I think it's very entertaining. But then, so it should be, with 100 people doing the effects..."

Ray Harryhausen, thank you very much.



"We made the whole of _The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms_ for $200,000. You can't even buy a costume for that now! Warner Bros bought it and made a fortune."

MONSTER PRIZES

YOUR CHANCE TO WIN ONE OF FIVE SETS OF THE LATEST WARNER BROS BEYOND VISION HARRYHAUSEN MONSTER RELEASES!

We have five sets of *One Million Years BC*, *The Valley of Gwangi* and *Clash of the Titans* to give away, but you're going to have to put in a bit of work if you're too stingy to fork out for them in the shops. If you know the answer to the question below, jot it down on a postcard (or back of a sealed-down envelope) and send it to: **Harry's Monster compo, SFX, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW** to get here by **30 November.** The first five correct entries out of the trash compactor get the vids. The question? Who was the Greek god of the oceans?

The 15 voyages of Ray Harryhausen

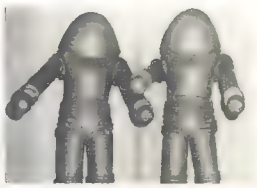
Ray Harryhausen's film career began with Mighty Joe Young, in which he worked for the great Willis O'Brien, but it was with The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms – and his first job as special effects supremo – that our story really begins. Join **Dave Golder** – and countless sea monsters, dinosaurs, and aliens – for a trip down stop-motion memory lane. Childhood nightmares were made of this...

The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms (1953) B

Dir: **Eugène Laurié**
Based on a Ray Bradbury story, *Beast* is pretty standard monster-awoken-by-nuclear-blast stuff, directed by Renoir's ex-art director. Eugène Laurié (who later helmed *Gorgo*). Harryhausen's effects, however, are the main reason the film became such a huge hit for Warner Bros.
Great Harryhausen moment:
The colossal Rhedosaurus attacking a lighthouse.

It Came from Beneath the Sea (1955) C+

Dir: **Robert Gordon**
The first of 12 Harryhausen/Charles H Schneer collaborations, this is, once again, a standard monster-on-the-rampage movie that's saved by Harryhausen's effects – although the octopus star only has five tentacles! ("It was a small budget," explains Harryhausen, pragmatically.)
Great Harryhausen moment:
The octopus attacking San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge.



Earth Versus the Flying Saucers (1956) B

Dir: **Fred F Sears**
Harryhausen's initial take on *The War of the Worlds*, in which the inhabitants of a dying planet are ultimately destroyed by ultra-high-frequency soundwaves. The stop-motion flying saucers are unusual, but highly effective (despite sounding like an over-boiling kettle when they fly).
Great Harryhausen moment:
One of the alien flying saucers crashing into the White House.

The Animal World (1957) D+

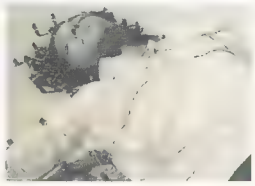
Dir. **Irwin Allen**
A semi-documentary feature by future disaster movie maestro Allen, *The Animal World* reunited Harryhausen with his mentor Willis O'Brien for a short sequence about dinosaurs. Otherwise, this is pretty unmemorable (indeed, the whole ad campaign was based around the dinosaurs, and ignored the rest of the movie).
Great Harryhausen moment:
The entire dinosaur sequence.

20 Million Miles to Earth (1957) B+

Dir: **Nathan Juran**
The first space mission to Venus returns carrying an egg that hatches into one of Harryhausen's most memorable monsters – the rapidly-growing Ymir. With echoes of *King Kong*, the film is a superior creature feature, and even features a cameo from Harryhausen as a zoo-keeper.
Great Harryhausen moment:
The Ymir hatching, rubbing its eyes at the harsh daylight.

The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad (1958) B

Dir: **Nathan Juran**
The first Dynamation movie, and a huge hit for Columbia. Based on the Sinbad myth in the way that *First Knight* is based on Mallory's *Morte D'Arthur*, it features a host of brilliant monsters, including a fabulous cyclops, a dragon and a sword-wielding skeleton.
Great Harryhausen moment:
The Cyclops roasting a human for lunch on a spit.



Three Worlds of Gulliver (1959) B

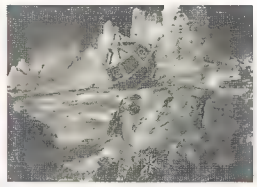
Dir: **Jack Sher**
Fairly slow, but sporadically interesting adaptation of the Jonathan Swift classic, which required some extensive rewrites to fit in Harryhausen's Dynamation effects. Kerwin Mathews, Sinbad in *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*, once again starred. Sadly, not a huge success.
Great Harryhausen moment:
The battle with the crocodile on the chessboard.

Mysterious Island (1961) C

Dir: **Cy Endfield**
Jules Verne's novel provided the inspiration for the next Harryhausen/Schneer project, with the effects now referred to as Superdynamation. A group of American civil war POWs escape in a balloon, and end on up on an island where Captain Nemo's experiments have produced various giant animals.
Great Harryhausen moment: **The giant hen, sorry, Phororhacos.**

Jason and the Argonauts (1963) A

Dir: **Don Chaffey**
Quite simply one of the best fantasy films ever made. Jason goes in search of the Golden Fleece, but runs up against the bronze giant Talos, the bat-like harpies, six skeletons and a three-headed hydra along the way
Great Harryhausen moment:
When the still statue of Talos turns its head unexpectedly...
Out on video this month



First Men in the Moon (1964) C

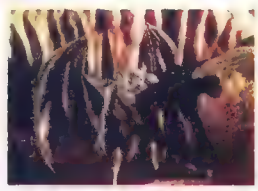
Dir: **Nathan Juran**
More "inspired by" than "based on" HG Wells' 1901 novel, *First Men* has a jokey earth-based preamble spotlighting the buffoonery of Lionel Jeffries as the professor who invents an anti-gravity substance. But when the action get to the moon, and Harryhausen's effects kick in, things get *really* interesting.
Great Harryhausen moment:
The Grand Lunar at the top of a massive flight of stairs.

One Million Years BC (1966) C+

Dir: **Don Chaffey**
Hammer's 100th movie is a prehistoric mish-mash about love, death and dinosaurs. Utter tosh, with designer cavemen and Raquel Welch looking, well, like Raquel Welch, but some of the special effects scenes are outstandingly memorable.
Great Harryhausen moment:
The archetypal Triceratops versus Ceratosaurus (Allosaurus-lookalike) battle.

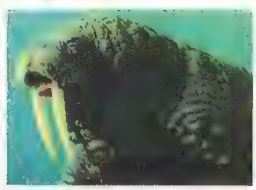
The Valley of Gwangi (1968) B

Dir: **James O'Connolly**
Harryhausen finally gets to make a project originally started by Willis O'Brien in 1942. It's basically *King Kong* set in the Wild West, and with a dinosaur instead of a giant ape.
Great Harryhausen moment:
The lassoing of the Gwangi, which still looks great, even by today's standards.
Out on video this month



The Golden Voyage of Sinbad (1974) B+

Dir: **Gordon Hessler**
Tom Baker stars as the evil magician Koura, who rapidly ages every time he casts a spell and so goes off in search of the fountain of youth. Monsters include a ship's figurehead that comes to life, a six-armed Kali, a griffin and Baker's bat-like servants, the Homunculus. Polished stuff.
Great Harryhausen moment: **The six swords appearing to "grow" out of the Kali's six hands.**

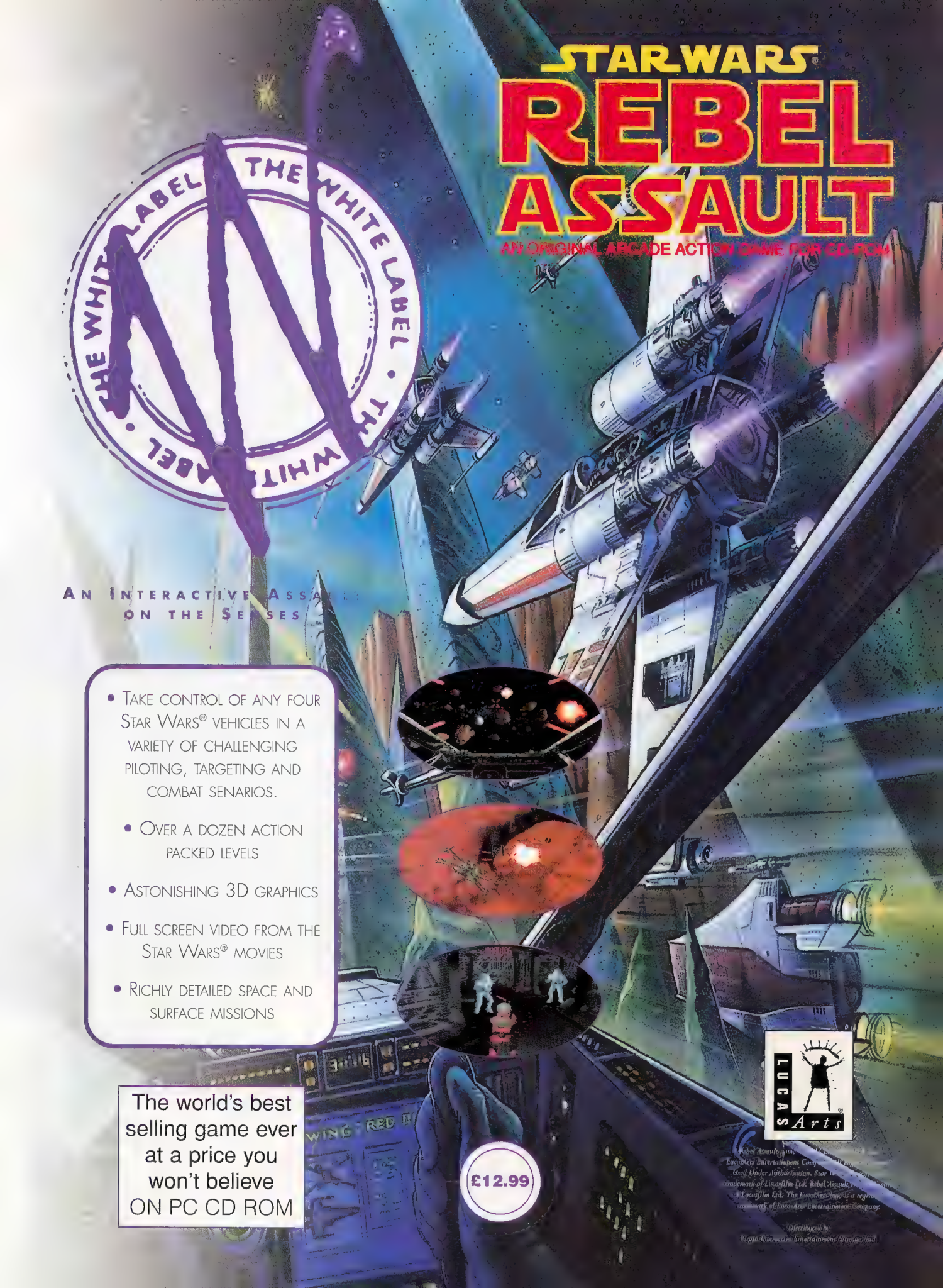


Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger (1977) C

Dir. **Sam Wanamaker**
Harryhausen-by-numbers, *Eye of the Tiger* is disappointing, and features some fairly humdrum monsters – a giant walrus, a giant tiger, etc. The animated baboon is convincing, which is more than can be said for the star, Patrick Wayne. The effects process is now called Dynarama.
Great Harryhausen moment: **The battle between the troglodyte and the sabre-toothed tiger.**

Clash of the Titans (1981) C+

Dir: **Desmond Davis**
With more plot than usual, and a better than average cast, *Clash* is a lot of fun, despite some creaky moments. The creatures are a mixed bunch, but the flying horse Pegasus and Medusa are simply superb.
Great Harryhausen moment: **The battle between Perseus and the brilliant Medusa.**
Out on video this month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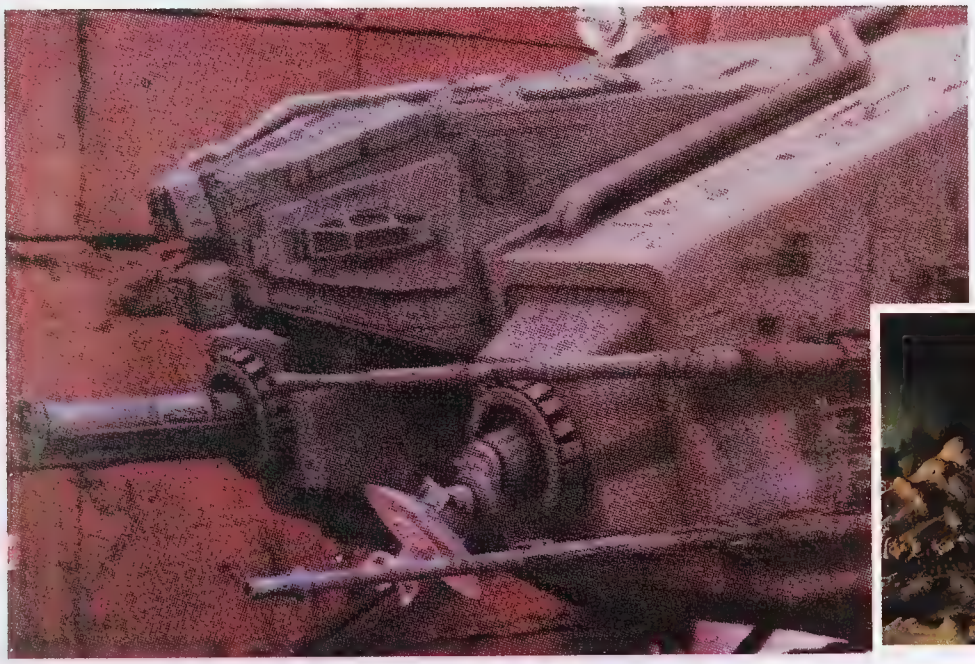


(Left) This cockpit section was added to the Nostromo model at the eleventh hour, placed between the hanging "lobes" that were originally meant to be at the front of the ship. The problem was that some full-scale cockpit windows had been built, but were completely out of scale with the windows situated behind the lobes on the model – there were eight or nine feet between the full-sized windows, but a scale 128 feet between those on the model! Something had to be done, and this cockpit, with its appropriately scaled windows, was the answer. The radar dish and additional probes were added at the same time, presumably to keep Ridley Scott happy...

SPIKY BITS

THE ORIGINAL RON COBB PICTURES WERE VERY STREAMLINED. COBB HAD WANTED THE SHIP TO LOOK 100% FEASIBLE, WITH A VERY SMOOTH UNDERSIDE, LIKE THE HEAT SHIELDS OF REAL NASA TECHNOLOGY. BUT DIRECTOR RIDLEY SCOTT INSISTED ON A LOT OF SURFACE BREAK-UP TO MAKE THE MODEL LOOK MORE MYSTERIOUS AND INTERESTING. HE WAS SHOOTING A HORROR FILM, AFTER ALL.

BILL PEARSON: "THE FIRST DAY RIDLEY CAME TO LOOK AT THE NOSTROMO, HE SAW THE BIG REFINERY MODEL, SPOTTED ALL THE SPIRES ON THE TOWERS, AND ASKED IF WE COULD PULL A FEW OF THEM OFF. SO I DID, AND HE ASKED IT I COULD STICK THEM ALONG THE UNDERSIDE OF THE NOSTROMO, SO THEY'D POINT DOWN TOWARDS THE SURFACE OF THE PLANET. RIDLEY KEPT ASKING ME TO STICK BITS ON THE MODEL... EVEN WHEN IT WAS IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA, HE'D SEE A BIT HE THOUGHT SHOULD BE BUSIER, SO WE'D STICK MORE WIGGETS ONTO IT. HE PARTICULARLY LIKED HIS ANTENNAE, BECAUSE HE COULD BRING HIS CAMERA RIGHT UP TO THEM, GIVING THE MODEL A RIGGED LOOK, LIKE AN OLD SAILING SHIP."

DARK GREY PAINT JOB

THE TUG WENT THROUGH FOUR DIFFERENT COLOUR SCHEMES BEFORE ARRIVING AT ITS FINAL MID-GREY LOOK...

BILL PEARSON: "IT WAS ORIGINALLY A SORT OF DIRTY YELLOW (AS SEEN ON THE EARLY VERSION ABOVE), NOT UNLIKE A JCB. THAT LOOKED QUITE INTERESTING, BUT THEN IT WENT TO A VERY DARK GREY, A DIRTY WHITE, AND, FINALLY, MID-GREY PRIMER, THE SAME COLOUR AS THE REFINERY, WHICH FITTED IN WITH THE NAUTICAL, HARD-WORKING LOOK. AFTER PAINTING, WE DIRTIED IT DOWN WITH BLACK POSTER PAINT, THEN RUBBED IT OFF WITH A CLOTH, LEAVING IT SETTLED IN THE NOOKS AND CRANNIES."

NOSTROMO

THE ORIGINAL, BIZARRELY-SHAPED, WIGGET-COVERED SPACE TUG, STAR OF THE MOVIE ALIEN...

BLOODY MASSIVE ENGINES
THE LARGE MAIN ENGINES (BUILT SEPARATELY, AND CLAD IN SHEETS OF PLASTIC CARD) ENDED UP THE SMOOTHEST PART OF THE SHIP. IN THE PRE-CGI WORLD OF THE LATE '70S, THE CREW FOUND THE BEST WAY TO CREATE AN ENGINE GLOW WAS TO PLACE 30-40 PROJECTOR BULBS INSIDE EACH ONE. **BILL PEARSON:** "RIDLEY WANTED MORE ENGINES ON THE BACK, AND WE ADDED THEM, SO IT GOT REALLY MESSY. THE SHAPE WAS SO ODD BY THE END OF IT THAT, WITHOUT LOOKING AT PICTURES, I'D BE VERY HARD PRESSED TO SIT DOWN AND ACTUALLY DRAW THE NOSTROMO... I THINK ANYONE WOULD."

NARCISSUS ESCAPE POD
THE SMALL VESSEL RIPLEY (AND JONES THE CAT) ESCAPE IN AT THE END OF THE FILM. **BILL PEARSON:** "THE ORIGINAL IDEA WAS THAT THERE WAS AN ESCAPE VEHICLE ON EITHER SIDE, UNDER THE WINGS, BUT IN THE FILM THERE'S A REFERENCE TO THE FACT THAT THE OTHER ONE HAD GONE DOWN, SO ONLY THE NARCISSUS WAS LEFT..."

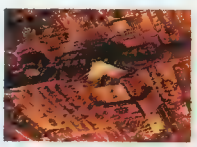
The unfortunate Nostromo, a blue-collar ore tug drawn by an ancient distress signal to an uninhabited world where all hell swiftly breaks loose, was based on a handful of drawings provided by the illustrator Ron Cobb. Built in 1978 at Bray Studios by Bill Pearson and his model shop team, under instruction from Shepperton-based model effects supervisor Brian Johnson, it incorporated features from around a dozen sketches. "Brian would tell us that the director, Ridley Scott, wanted the front end of one drawing, the engines from another, the landing rig from a third, and so on," Bill laughs.

The main model, built from steel, plywood, and plastic sheeting, and covered in thousands of "wiggets" (the British film industry's name for detailing made from model kit parts), was almost ten feet long, built that large so that the film crew could obtain believable dust effects for the landing sequence. It was filled with the primitive fibre-optics of the time, to suggest hundreds of tiny, lit windows, although these are rarely visible in the final cut. A half size model was later made for the flying sequences, which often used a technique perfected by Johnson and partner Nicky Allder on *Space: 1999*, whereby the model remains stationary, and only the camera actually moves. Finally, a tiny 18-inch model was built to go with the space refinery model, a massive structure nine feet by seven in plan view, and covered with cathedral-like towers up to five feet high.

"Because the final ship was a combination of pieces from so many drawings, the idea became that it was just so vast that different companies would have actually built different parts of it," says Pearson. "None of the model makers were in love with the shape, because it didn't look like it'd been *designed*. We talked about this, and in the end decided this was actually quite realistic. It was, after all, something that would spend most of its life in space, built for just one function – to pull the refinery. The makers would have had no reason to make it look pretty."

When Pearson's model crew started work on the Nostromo, the film was a small-scale, low budget Gothic horror, an easy run-up to promised work (which never materialised) on the *Star Wars* sequel. Slowly, though, news started filtering through from the main unit at Shepperton that the live-action stuff was something very special indeed – and the budget started to grow.

"At the start, we were working with a couple of hundred quid's worth of materials," Bill remembers, "but by the end of it I could order whatever I wanted. I think I worked out I'd spent £86,000 on the Nostromo in the end, but the studio didn't care. They knew they had a hit on their hands."



Neutral Zone

CONTACT US AT:

SFX, FUTURE PUBLISHING, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, AVON BA1 2BW, OR VIA E-MAIL AT sfx@futurenet.co.uk. THE BEST LETTER EACH MONTH WILL WIN AN EXCLUSIVE SFX T-SHIRT.

20 degrees of separation, homophobia & anoraks

"UNSUBTLE HOMOEROTIC IMAGERY"

Dear SFX,
This may seem like I am whinging on about a minor point, but it is something I feel strongly about. In Dave Golder's review of Clive Barker's recently released shorts *Salome* and *The Forbidden* he says "the unsubtle homoerotic imagery may put some off" – surely he means some straight people might be put off, or is he trying to imply that the readership of SFX is exclusively heterosexual?

There are plenty of films around which have unsubtle heterosexual imagery and indeed explicit heterosexual sex scenes, but reviewers do not often see fit to include a caveat in their reviews saying that some homosexual/ bisexual people may be put off by this!

SL Kells
Bexleyheath

PS. Can you name one SF TV series that has a gay/bisexual character or has this kind of thing been "cured" in the future?

Point taken. It would take a bigotted homophobe indeed to find the sexuality of Barker's films more disturbing than the visceral special effects. As for gay/bisexual characters on TV, there are very few (the only one that we can think of is Babylon 5*'s Talia Winters, and then that's only hinted at), but this is because TVSF is largely aimed at a "family" audience and so sexuality of any sort is generally swept under the carpet. However, there is a whole sub-genre of fan-fiction – "slash" – based around "implicit" homosexual subtexts in TV shows, from Kirk and Spock to Bodie and Doyle(!).*

There is also a very large canon of written SF based around homosexual or bisexual themes and characters; Samuel R Delaney's work is the obvious example. An organisation for gay, bisexual and lesbian SF fans was set up at this year's Worldcon and can be contacted by sending an SAE to: Delaney's Children, 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London NW3 6PX. If anyone else has views on this or other gay/bisexual/lesbian issues in SF, write to us at the usual address.

"SFX#0"

Dear SFX,
I saw the cover of SFX #0 on the back of Comics International and would be very interested in getting my hands on a copy. Do you have any left?

John Mazzeo
Streatham

SFX issue zero was merely a dummy cover used for advertising purposes, and therefore doesn't technically exist within this dimension. Sorry.

"TOTAL COMPOST"

Dear SFX,
What passes for science fiction these days is total compost. To me, it will always be LITERATURE. By this I mean proper "original idea" novels, and *not* novelisations or *Star Trek* novels. How can they call that literature? They

T-SHIRT WINNER!

"FILL IN THE TITLE YOURSELF"

Dear SFX,
After reading the "Fill in the title yourself" suggestion under Honey, I... in Production Hell (SFX4), I thought I'd send in a few ideas.

1. *Honey, I Revived the Kid.* Sometime after the second film, the littlest (biggest?) kid dies of a psychiatric disorder triggered by becoming incredibly large in early childhood. Frankenstein-like, Rick Moranis revives the corpse and much improbable hilarity ensues.
2. *Honey, I Cloned the Kid.* Moranis leaves a solar-powered machine in the attic, the kid trips over the large, obvious on/off switch and gets cloned hundreds of times over.
3. *Honey, I Sold the Kid.* A group of short, dark-eyed intergalactic traders con the accident-prone scientist into exchanging his children for undreamt-of technologies. His wife is naturally disappointed by his *naïveté* and

Honey, I wouldn't let the franchise drop. The third instalment in Disney's "wacky inventor" saga is on show at Walt Disney World in Florida.

demands that he tries to get the kid back.
4. *Honey, I Bit the Kid.* Turns out he's a vampire.
5. *Honey, I Clive Barkered the Kid.* The kid is sent to another dimension full of cannibalistic, necrophiliac demons, with hooks in them.
6. *Honey, I HR Gigered the Kid.* Rick goes for a more biological approach. The kid accidentally swallows some eggs and becomes the host for a new species of metamorphic, quasi-mechanical horrors.
7. *Honey, I Beat the Kids.* A decidedly less entertaining tone for the series, but dig the social relevance!
8. *Honey, I Processed the Kid.* The unfortunate kid is committed entirely to computer disk, to be loaded up only when his parents aren't busy.
9. *Honey, I Frightened the Kid...* and thus triggers latent psychokinetic abilities.
10. *Honey, Some FBI Agents Came Round.* Mulder hears tales of half-mile-high toddlers and smells a government cover-up.

Wes White
Glastonbury

Interestingly, Disney has already made the third Honey, I... *movie. It's called Honey, I Shrunk the Audience and is a 20-minute-long 3D short only screened at the Epcot Centre in Walt Disney World, Florida, starring Eric Idle and original cast members Marcia Strassman and Robert Oliveri (but not Rick Moranis).*

After the success of Honey, I Shrunk the Kids, *Disney copyrighted three – but as-yet unused – titles for the sequel:* Honey, I Xeroxed the Kids; Honey, I Made the Kids Invisible; *and* Honey, I Sent the Kids to the Moon.

Finally, the SF & Fantasy Humour Society, Octarine, produce a T-shirt based on a poster for the final film in the series: Honey, the Kids Appear to Have Run Away.

SFXCELLENT! Best Bit of Science Fiction Ever

Each month in SFX, a reader nominates The Best Bit Of Science Fiction Ever: A book, film, comic, or TV series that's unashamedly brilliant and knocks lesser SF stuff into a cocked astronaut's helmet. This issue, John Medhurst of London puts forward the vote for Greg Bear's 1985 novel *Blood Music*.

"Since the mid '80s, Greg Bear has firmly established his reputation as a hard SF writer with books like *Eon*, *The Forge of God* and *Moving Mars*, but for me his best work, and quite possibly the best SF I've ever read, is a short novel that stands above all of these.

"*Blood Music* starts small and concludes by depicting the complete End of Life as We Know It. Cutting expertly between a host of characters and viewpoints, it follows the progression of biological 'noocytes,' a new form of blood cell that combines, creates and thinks for itself, from test-tube to all-pervasive life form. From the moment an obsessive scientist injects himself with the results of an unethical experiment, Bear catalogues the relentless transformation of the world with a breathtaking mixture of terror and awe. The complete irrelevance of the individual human perspective is rammed home in the pitiful attempts made by all the characters, layperson and scientist alike, to understand what is unfolding around them. And yet the sheer intellectual zest of the story is never lost – one of many highpoints is the radio report made by a BBC journalist flying over an American landscape that's been turned into a biological wonderland.

"From Genetics to Quantum Physics, Bear upends all 'common sense' assumptions and the narrative grips like a vice. If you like strong, literate SF for adults, check out *Blood Music*. How many other books could turn the end of the universe into a genuinely happy ending?"

are simply a way for people to make money. You didn't understand the film? Don't worry! Buy the book! That will tell you everything you need to know, plus lots of things that weren't even *in* the film, or were removed from the script for good reason (ie. because they were crap), so that you can appear clever by starting a conversation that will begin, "What actually happened was this..."

Star Trek novels are the pits as far as I'm concerned. Someone, somewhere either writes the story they always wanted to see, or uses material that was originally rejected as an actual script. The results bear absolutely no relation to the series at all. How *can* people buy them?

My favourite hate of all time concerns comics/graphic novels, call them what you like. (A dead rat by any other name is still a dead rat.) What the hell are they? All the people I know who revere them have never read a book in their life. Is it because they've got lots of pretty pictures in them that they sell so well? Can't people struggle through reams of text without getting bored? Or is it just that they find the written bits boring and want to look at pictures of blood and guts? At best, these are a bastard hybrid of the worst things in SF and do not deserve the trouble of reading them. Someone has an idea for a story but does not have enough know-how to do it, or not even enough story sometimes so they just add some pictures, an "adult" theme and some close up drawings of body parts being mutilated, and they can flesh it out into a comic.

This is my own personal hate. You can *never* convince me that they are part of the SF family tree. They are just something a dog has done up against a tree...

Michelle Varney
Nottingham

We considered responding to this carefully reasoned and logically explained argument, clearly written by a well-balanced, open-minded individual, who has an insider's detailed knowledge of the workings of the TV tie-in and comics industries.

Then we thought it might be a piss-take; surely nobody is this narrow-minded? Then we realised that some people really do think like this, so – piss-take or not – we shall leave it up to our readers to explain to Michelle how her life could be enriched by somewhat broadening her SF horizons.

"THE ANORAK IMAGE"

Dear SFX,

All hail, Channel 4. Well, almost. Their Sci-Fi Weekend was a mix of the good, the bad and the totally shit.

The good: *Beam Me Up, Scotty!* (Nice to see Craig Charles back on form after the recent media witch hunt); *Destroy All Monsters* (Well, I liked it, and I know many others did but would never admit to it); *Outland* (Even if you only gave it a C- in the video reviews section, it was worth at least B for effort).

The bad (or should that be "the corny"?): *Take-over TV* (This did nothing for the anorak image, e.g. The singing Klingon!); *Secret History: The Roswell Incident* (Worth watching for the fun of the "autopsy"); *I Married A Monster from Outer Space* (Some will have liked it, but I can think of at least six better '50s B-movies).

And then there's the totally shit *Metropolis:* Ten out of ten for showing one of the greatest sci-fi movies of all time, but to show this "reworking" was inexcusable. I think Channel 4 have some explaining to do.

Neil Matthews
Exeter

PS. Who played Maria?

Brigitte Helm played both the "good" Maria and her evil android double. She is now 89 and lives in Austria. An excellent, tinted 35mm print of Metropolis *was compiled in the late '70s by the East German film archive, editing together all the versions around the world into the longest print possible. It runs to about 160 minutes in length (20 minutes less than the 1926 copyrighted running time) and is an incredible experience, especially if seen with live accompaniment. The Giorgio Moroder version is an abomination.*

The SFX letters page is like a box of chocolates – you never know what you're gonna get (until you look at the pretty pictures under the lid). Or something...

15 DEGREES OF SEPARATION (REVISITED)

Dear SFX,

Shared universes? Oh dear, you did ask...

1 *Doctor Who* has, in comic form at least, been well rooted in the Marvel Universe, meeting on at least two occasions the original...
2 Death's Head in the pages of *DW*. In fact, once the Doctor escaped by sending DH to 4 Freedoms Plaza, home of...
3 The Fantastic Four, who, in some comic in the '60s, met Liverpool's own Fab Four.
4 Who, in *Help!*, met McCartney's fictional uncle, played by Wilfrid Brambell, who played...
5 Albert Steptoe in two films. At the end of the first, their cart was in the way of a Rolls...
6 Belonging to the Queen, who was caught in a very embarrassing position with...
7 Frank Drebin of *The Naked Gun*, before...
8 George Bush appeared in the sequel, whose...
9 Predecessor Richard Nixon met...
10 Forrest Gump, who had previously been referred to in the early Tom Cruise film *Legend* ("What? You mean you haven't heard of the Gump?") which also featured Tim Curry as...
11 The Devil who appeared under another guise in the Bogus Journey of...
12 Bill & Ted, who in the same film met...
13 The Grim Reaper after his performance in...
14 *The Last Action Hero*, in which Jack Slater lived in the same universe as...
15 The T-1000, which fought the original...
16 Terminator, who James Cameron originally saw living in the same universe as the...
17 Aliens, who recently fought...
18 Superman, who in the '70s twice met...
19 Spider-Man, who once fought alongside...
20 Captain Britain, who met...
21 The Special Executive whose first published mission was set on Gallifrey, home of...

Mark Gardiner
Edinburgh

A lot of time on your hands, then, Mark?

THE SFX WAFF BOX...

This month, We Also Heard From the following...

Gary Sargenson, Ayrshire; ***X-Phile Caroline Smith***, Manchester; ***X-Phobe Nik Rochdale***, Manchester ("It's a pile of crap..."); ***David Bisset***, Aberdeen ("During one of my mother's cupboard clearouts she gave to a jumble sale all of my *2000AD* comics Nos. 1-30."); ***Liam Astley***, Charlbury; ***Dan Whelan***, Colwyn Bay ("Is there a *Quantum Leap* movie in production?" *No – Ed.*); ***Mr RA Dredd***, Jersey ("My real name"); ***Mr CR Sinclair***, Belfast ("*The Puppet Masters* as *Bodysnatchers* rip-off? Probably not." *Dave Golder's acknowledgement that 'Bodysnatchers' was in fact inspired by the Heinlein novel disappeared during editing – Ed.*); ***Tony Larner*** Milton Keynes ("Has Robert Aspr n written any "Myth" books *since Little Myth Marker?*" Yes, *M.Y.T.H. Inc. Link* (1986), *Myth-Nomers & Impervections* (1987), *M.Y.T.H. Inc. In Action* (1990), and *Sweet Myth-tery Of Life* (1994) *– Ed*); ***David Halama***, Stourbridge; ***Andy Grant***, Croydon (who both sent us answers (sort of) to our list of things wrong with *Waterworld*); ***Paul Rowe***, Redruth (who sent us six further things wrong with *Waterworld*); ***Gary Dalkin***, Bournemouth (13 things wrong with *Waterworld!*); ***Peter G Mitchell***, Chester ("Katie of Orange might try to obtain a US (NTSC) copy of *A Clockwork Orange* (Warner Bros. cat.no. 1031, digitally remastered)"); ***Alan Maxwell*** ("*The War of the Worlds* series isn't that cheesy"); ***Stephen Edwards***, Dudley; ***Tim Mewton***, Malmesbury; ***James Quinn***, Shrewsbury; ***Mr O Zambon*** London; ***Jamie Leader***, Barrow-on-Soar, ***John McKee***, Cornwall (who wants the address of "the" *X-Files* Fan Club – anybody know if there's an official one?); ***Laura Pearse***, Haywards Heath ("I'd like to work for a sci-fi mag like yours when I'm older, but as I'm only 12 I'll have to wait a while."); ***Mr MR Gorski***, London; ***Ben Craig***, London; *Rocky Horror* fan ***Rob Bagnall***, Leek; ***Sarah Ockenden***, Milton Keynes; ***Ross Sillifant***, Devon; ***Matthew Harper***, Reading; ***Paul Beer***, Penarth; and ***G Mackintosh***, Aberdeen.

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David Langford

Noises Off

It is, of course, unfair to authors, but don't you sometimes find yourself fascinated by some books' stylistic quirks and tics, to the point where they overshadow the narrative? In Norman Spinrad's *Bug Jack Barron*, for instance, the big question was how long the author could wait before writing "nitty-gritty" again. Meanwhile, EE "Doc" Smith hypnotises us with futuristic conversational idioms – "In sync to the skillionth of a whillionth of a nanosecond!" is his characters' way of saying "Yes," and "By Klono's tungsten teeth and curving carballoy claws!" means, roughly, "Oh dear."

Heinlein's *The Number of the Beast* set readers counting the many subtle allusions to female breasts, or as he liked to call them, "teats" – beginning on page one and climaxing with the supremely tasteful description of a kiss from the lady's viewpoint: "Our teeth grated, and my nipples went spung!"

Similarly, in the Thomas Covenant books by Stephen R Donaldson there was the thrill of detecting when the great man had turned again to the Oxford English Dictionary to improve his style. Argute with concentration and caducity, he would make his preterite way through its gelid, sapid pages, full of beneficent mansuetude and analystic refulgence, and hurl each clinquant new discovery at you like a jerid. "They were featureless and telic, like lambent gangrene. They looked horribly like children." One doesn't like to think what children look like in Donaldson's part of the world.

My latest favourite, though, is LE Modesitt and his "Recluce" fantasy series. Modesitt likes sound effects, always in italics. His books never say, "There was a knock at the door," but *"Thrap."* So when I came to read *The Magic Engineer*, I thought it would be fun to note down all the sounds in its 750-odd pages.

The result is something of a prose poem which conveys the entire book in distilled form. I persuaded actor Mike Cule (and one-time Vogon) to declaim it ringingly as part of a programme item at the World SF Convention in Glasgow earlier this year. (Page numbers in bold.)

4 ... clung ...
55 ... clickedy ... click ...
61 Flappppp ... thwipp ...
67 thunkkkk ... hhhnnnnn ...
68 ... hhhnnnn ... hhhhnnnn ... thump ... slurrppp ... thump ... thump ...
70 ... hhhhnnnnn ... thump ... thump ...
72 Thweeeeett ...
74 Wheeee ... eee ...
75 Whheeeee ...
77 Whheeee ... eeeee ...
78 Snick ... Whhsttttt ...
81 ... tu ... whuuuu ...
82 ... tu ... whuuuu ...
87 Whuuu ... uffffff ...
92 Thhuummpp ...
93 Whhhheeeeee ... rrrmmmmm ... rrrrmmmmm ... thrummmbblle
94 wehhhhheeeee ... cracccckkkkkk ... crackkkkk ...
99 Creeeeaaakkk ...
100 Creaaakkk.
104 Squeakkk ... Whhhsttt.
105 Squeaakkk ...
110 Click ... clickedy ... click ...
119 ooooo
120 oooo
126 Whhnnnnn ... nnnun ...
222 burrruppp
261 Clunk!
274 Thrap ... thrap ...
278 Creakkkkk ...
295 Whuuuffff ...
314 crummp
359 Crummmppp ...
371 Whuffffff ...
374 Whhnnnnn ...
375 Crummmpppp ...
376 Whuffff ...
383 Thrap ...
387 Clunnnggggg ... clunnggg ...
412 Crack! Crack! Crack!
435 Creakkkk ...
480 thunk
492 ... clung ...
493 Clung ...
505 Wheeee ...
506 Whheeeee ... Whhheeeee ...
512 Keee ... aaa ... keee ... aaaa ... Keee ... aaaa ... keee ... aaaa ...
524 Crumpppp!!
527 Wheeennn ...
549 Thwannnnngggg ...
557 Wheee ... eeeee ...
566 Fwwuuuphhh ... fwuppp ... Fwwwuuuppphhh ... fwupp ... fwuppp ... Clunk ...
567 Creaakkkkk ... creeakkkk ... WHHHHHEEEEEEEEeeeee ...
570 terwhit
574 CRRRRRuuummmmmpppp!!!! (three instances, in fact...)
582 CRUUUMPPPPPP!!!!
588 Whheeee ...
585 terwhit
601 Terwhit ... terwhit.
611 Scccffff ...
624 Click ... click ... WHHHssssttt! Crack ... thump ... whummmmmmPPPPTTTTTTT ... EEEEEEEEIIIIIIIIiiii!
625 Thurrrrummmmmmmmmm ... thuruummmmm ...
628 fwwuuuphhh ... fwuppp ... Fwwwuuuppphhh ... fwuupp ... fwuppp ...
639 PHsssttttt ... PHHHsssttttt ... Phhhssst ... plattt!!! Shhhh ... plattt ...
671 CRRRuuummmppp!
685 Gee – ahhh ...
741 Whhhsttttt ...
Er, THHEEee EENndd? ∞

"Modesitt likes sound effects, always in italics. His books never say, 'There was a knock at the door,' but *'Thrap.'*"

Crrr-ash! That's the sound of Langford's shelf collapsing under the weight of all those bloody Hugo awards...

Rob Scott

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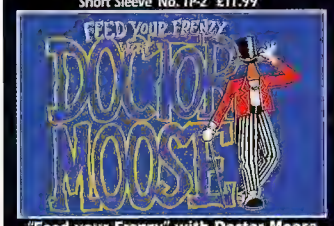

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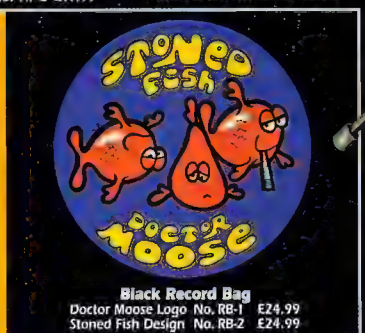

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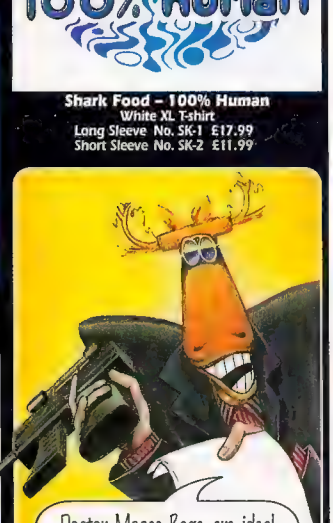

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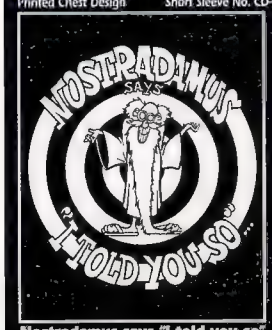

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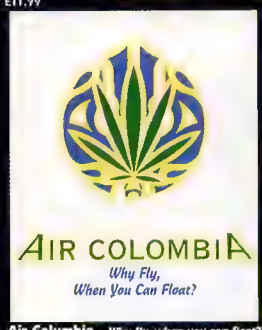

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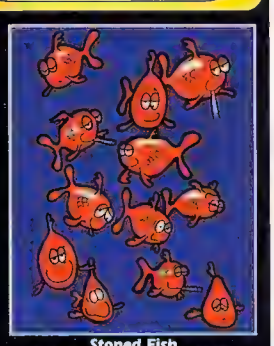

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John Grant

A Duck And Mouse Game

On Thursday 22 June of this year, there was an anniversary celebration that went singularly unnoticed by our national newspapers. Yet, in terms of the history of cinema, it represented an important milestone. A party was held to mark the occasion; I bitterly resented being unable to go.

But, you see, the party was in Burbank, California. And the occasion? The 25th anniversary of the Walt Disney Archives.

The Archives is an institution that you truly start to appreciate only when you try to get hard information out of any of the other studios. At Disney, a small professional team swiftly answers your questions with the kind of hard data a researcher can normally only dream about...

The story of the Archives really began in 1966, when a young librarian at the University College of Los Angeles, David R Smith, heard that Walt Disney had died. Discovering that no Disney bibliography existed, he set about compiling one for himself in his spare time. He soon added a filmography to the compilation. When, some years later, UCLA became interested in adding Walt's papers to its library, Smith was obviously in on the discussions. But it soon became apparent that the company's historical records really required, in effect, a library all of its own.

Smith performed a feasibility study and when, some months afterwards, Disney decided to set up the Archives, he was the obvious front-runner candidate for the job. He joined the company for that purpose in mid-1970 – and, astonishingly enough, he's still there now. So the celebration last June was not just some sort of corporate occasion. It represented a personal triumph for the tenacity and ability of one dedicated man – Dave Smith.

Rob Scott

"After discovering that no Disney bibliography existed when Walt died, librarian David R Smith set about compiling one for himself – in his spare time."

Dave wouldn't put it like this himself: He is the most modest of men. He is also one of the most obliging, as I myself discovered about a decade ago when I went across to Burbank to spend five or six weeks researching in the Archives for the first edition of my *Encyclopaedia of Walt Disney's Animated Characters.*

Dave and his staff – then Paula Sigman, Rose Motzko and Karen Brower – devoted considerable time to helping me, and for several months after my return spent even more time answering my queries by phone, fax and letter, and sending me all sorts of material. Dave and Paula read the book in both manuscript and proof form, corrected the masses of errors that I'd made, and pointed out plenty of things I'd missed too.

When the time came, a few years ago, for a new edition of the *Encyclopaedia* to be put together, Paula and Karen had moved on, but the same degree of friendly, constructive and often witty assistance was on offer from Dave and Rose, and newcomers Robert Tieman and Jennifer Hendrickson. Without it, the book could never have come into existence.

So what are the Archives like? Well, at first they seem quiet, clean, and far smaller than you'd imagine. In fact, they're not *that* small, because behind the main offices is a larger room in which the vast bulk of the archival material is stored. It's a room forbidden to non-Archivists, because much of the material in it – decades-old magazine cuttings, etc. – could be replaced only with great difficulty.

But printed materials are only a part of the Archives. Thanks to Smith's work, originals of dozens of early Disney movies – like the rare *Alice* shorts from the '20s, some of which I've been lucky enough to see on video there – have been tracked down and brought to this tranquil home. In recent years, Disney's Photo Library has become a part of the Archives, hugely swelling its visual resources. And there are some unclassifiable items too – like a few stretches of uncoloured, un-tidied-up animators' drawings from *The Fox and the Hound.* (The result has a vibrancy greater than any polished movie could have had: I do wish a video could be released of this material.)

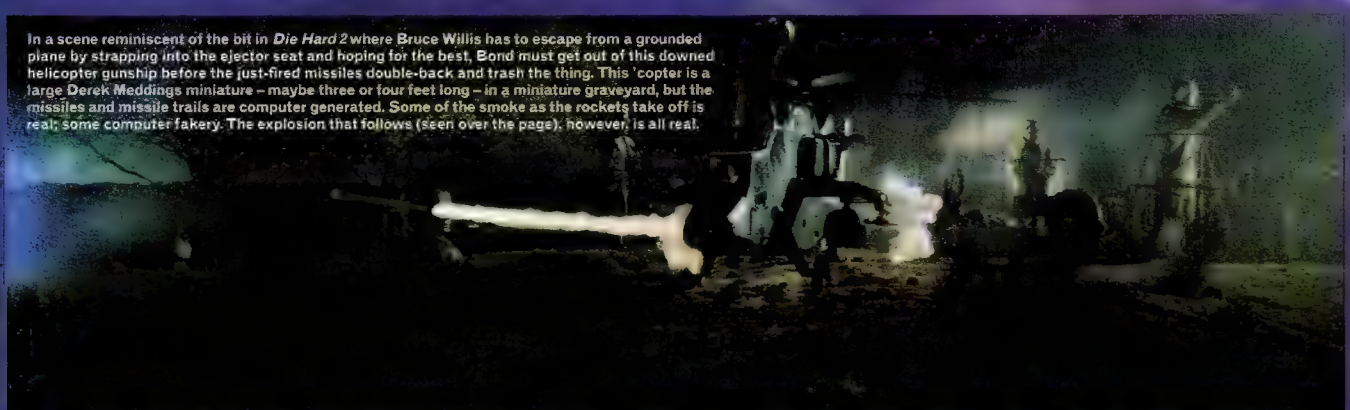
To the casual visitor, the most wonderful aspect of the Archives derives from its ephemera. Here you see an animator's plaster reference model for a character like Pete's Dragon. There you see some of the cels used in the making of a classic animated feature. And over there is the actual snowstorm globe that appeared in that famous scene in *Mary Poppins*...

The whole place is a monument to one of the world's most unusual companies – and a testament to a remarkable man.

Happy Anniversary, Dave. Here's to the 50th.

John Grant appreciates having research made easy for him – as do we all.

GOLDENEYE: THE FINAL WEEKS



In a scene reminiscent of the bit in *Die Hard 2* where Bruce Willis has to escape from a grounded plane by strapping into the ejector seat and hoping for the best, Bond must get out of this downed helicopter gunship before the just-fired missiles double-back and trash the thing. This 'copter is a large Derek Meddings miniature – maybe three or four feet long – in a miniature graveyard, but the missiles and missile trails are computer generated. Some of the smoke as the rockets take off is real; some computer fakery. The explosion that follows (seen over the page), however, is all real.

IT'S THE FIRST JAMES BOND FILM SINCE 1989 – AND IT COULD BE THE BEST SINCE SEAN CONNERY HUNG UP HIS WALTHER PPK FOR GOOD. AS THE FINAL CUT OF GOLDENEYE IS RUSHED TOGETHER FOR A LATE NOVEMBER RELEASE, **MATT BIELBY** JOINS THE MAGIC CAMERA COMPANY TO WATCH THE COMPUTER-GENERATED SFX GET ADDED TO THE MIX. FROM WHAT WE'VE SEEN, THIS IS GOING TO BE SOME MOVIE...

Everyone knows it's not a glamorous business, film-making. Film sets are boring places, often cold and miserable, and full of people hanging around waiting for something to do. Film studios, as anyone who's ever visited Pinewood or Shepperton will testify, are a confusing maze of temporary-looking buildings, about as glamorous as a factory – which, in a way, is what they are.

We all know this, and yet when I go along to Shepperton to see some of the final computer-generated effects added to *Goldeneye*, the 17th (or 19th, if you count *Casino Royale* and *Never Say Never Again)* James Bond film, I'm unprepared for what I find. Shepperton is its normal weather-beaten self, but it's still a shock to discover hundreds of thousands (perhaps millions) of pounds' worth of computer equipment located in what looks very much like, well, a portacabin... I'm not sure exactly why, but it feels very, very wrong...

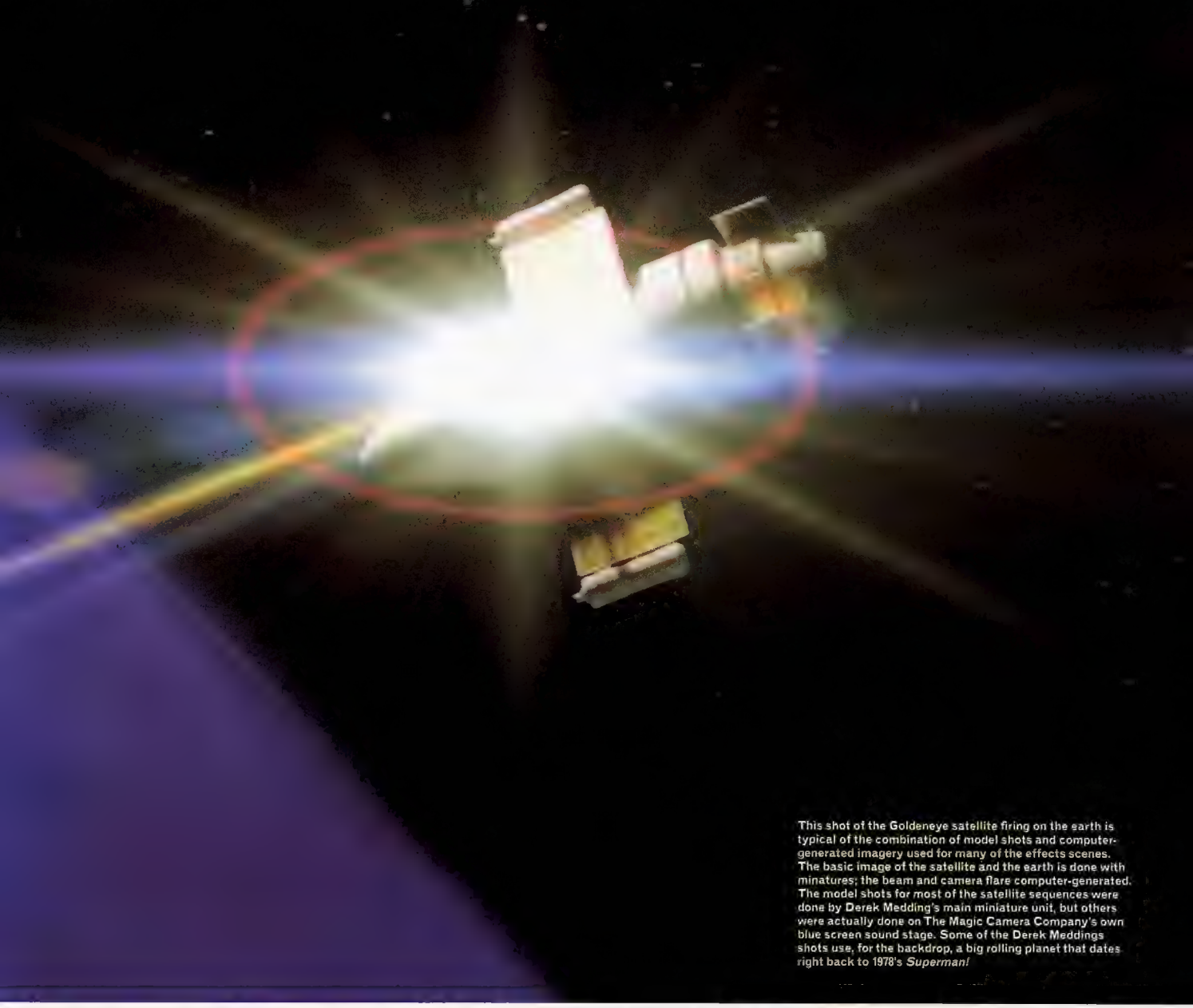
As I write, *Goldeneye* is fast nearing completion. And with good reason – it's due to go on national release on 24 November. Everything's been shot, the soundtrack's being tidied up, and here, at The Magic Camera Company, owner of the portacabin, Steve Begg's racing against time to add convincing animated lightning to around 30 live-action shots. "I think I've got to be the world expert on animated lightning by now," he grumbles. "To be honest, I'm getting a bit sick of it."

I'm not surprised. *Goldeneye's* director, Martin Campbell – perhaps best known for helming the BBC's remarkable *Edge of Darkness* series back in 1985 – is a notorious stickler for accuracy, and Begg's now redoing certain shots for the fourth or fifth time. "Martin's very particular about his animation, in a way I've never come across in my life. He studies everything frame by frame. Quite rightly, he wanted to avoid a painted-on, Disney look to the animation – he was after total realism."

The sequence in question appears towards the end of the film. It's the bit you remember from every Bond movie – the big building is blowing up, and our heroine is scrabbling for safety. This time, though, the victim's an unfortunate satellite relay station, caught in a massive electrical storm caused by the destruction of the "Goldeneye" satellite, and as blowing-things-up scenes go it's a doozy. Computers explode in a shower of sparks, whole banks of TV monitors self-destruct, our heroine is thrown 20 feet across the room... And everywhere there's Steve's painstakingly drawn electrical energy, crackling around the place.

"I used to do electrical effects just like this for Gerry Anderson's *Space Precinct,* using more or less the same equipment, and one shot would take about 40 minutes," Steve laughs. "The same thing can take me about four weeks on *Goldeneye.*"

BY ALL ACCOUNTS GOLDENEYE IS GOING TO BE RATHER SPECIAL. THE NEW James Bond, Pierce Brosnan, is said to be very good, as are baddies Robbie Coltrane, as a ex-KGB-man-turned-Russian-mafioso, and Sean Bean as 006 – a rogue British agent, and a fair match for 007. The finished film is far less fantastical than mid-period Roger Moore Bonds, with their *Spy Who Loved Me* sub-eating tankers and *Moonraker* spacestations, but at the same time more upbeat than the recent Timothy Dalton outings. A sense of humour is back, apparently, and outrageously over-the-top villainy – but all played as realistically as possible.



This shot of the Goldeneye satellite firing on the earth is typical of the combination of model shots and computer-generated imagery used for many of the effects scenes. The basic image of the satellite and the earth is done with minatures; the beam and camera flare computer-generated. The model shots for most of the satellite sequences were done by Derek Medding's main miniature unit, but others were actually done on The Magic Camera Company's own blue screen sound stage. Some of the Derek Meddings shots use, for the backdrop, a big rolling planet that dates right back to 1978's *Superman!*

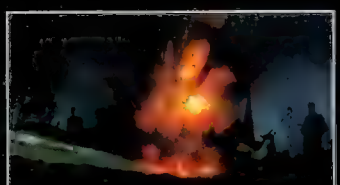
Aside from laser-watches and other gadgetry, there's one major reason why *Goldeneye* qualifies as SFX-material, and that's the "Goldeneye" itself, a highly advanced Russian satellite. It's a weapon, of course, but not as outlandish as some we've seen in the past. Instead of firing a laser, it causes what The Magic Camera Company's digital effects supervisor, Alan Marques, refers to as, "this wonderful electrical storm in the atmosphere. It basically energises anything metal in its path, and causes all this destruction." Designed to make computers crash, and so hold the world to financial ransom, it manages some much more spectacular destruction too. "It causes a whole wing of MiGs to collide and crash, and electrifies this big satellite dish, so the whole interior explodes!" Alan grins.

A LOT OF EFFECTS PEOPLE HAVE WORKED ON GOLDENEYE. THE SPECIAL effects supervisor was, of course, the late Derek Meddings, who sadly and unexpectedly died towards the end of filming – the film will, in fact, be dedicated to him. Working with Meddings at the main model unit – located in an old Rolls Royce factory at Leavesden – were Brian Smithy and Derek's son, Mark, who put together the large model sets used for a number of sequences, where they were often combined with live-action shots. One shot, for instance, shows a large radio telescope dish, based on the famous Arecibo dish in Puerto Rico, rising out of a lake, while a group of actors move around in the foreground. In another, a woman in seen staggering through the snow, surrounded by the wreckage of a trashed radio telescope dish. Again, all the wreckage is one of Derek Medding's big miniatures, combined seamlessly with a live action shot of an actress by The Magic Camera Company.

"Any time you see a shot of great scale or mass destruction, you can be pretty sure it's one of Derek's," laughs Steve Begg, over drinks at the studio bar. "After all, that's the kind of work he's always been known for. By all accounts, one of the highlights of the film is a battle between

"We hope the stuff that we, and The Moving Picture Company, have done on *Goldeneye* will help educate people a little bit."

Alan Marques, digital effects supervisor for The Magic Camera Company



Goldsmiths

GETTING INTO DIGITAL FX ISN'T EASY, YOU KNOW. OR, ER, MAYBE IT IS...

Alan Marques got into computer graphics by accident, after leaving college in 1983. He worked for eight years on TV commercials and the like, before setting up his own company to work on the ill-fated Gerry Anderson cartoon series, *GFI*. ("It was basically International Rescue in space – they had the base, the family, and all the ships.") When that folded, he started working with The Magic Camera Company, eventually joining to head up their new digital effects department. Landing a year's work on *Space Precinct* expanded the facility considerably; recent jobs have included the upcoming *Hackers* and *Muppet Treasure Island*.

Steve Begg got his first job in the industry on Gerry Anderson's *Terrahawks*, and was quickly promoted to special effects director. Later, he worked on *Aliens*, where he directed many of the shots featuring the APC tank, and under Derek Meddings on Tim Burton's *Batman*. After jobs on low-budget films like *Nostradamus*, he supervised the effects on *Space Precinct*, where he became familiar with the Matador 2D paint system which served him well when he was asked to work on *Hackers*.

"Martin [Campbell] is very particular about his animation, in a way I've never come across in my life. He studies everything frame by frame. Quite rightly, he wanted to avoid a painted-on, Disney look to anything – he was after total realism."

Steve Begg, "world's leading animated lightning specialist"

A satellite blows up, and begins to re-enter the atmosphere. Shot in front of a blue screen on a motion-control stage, the satellite is (or, er, was) a model, and the explosion a pyrotechnic, but the fireball and trail are computer-generated.

a T-59 tank and an armoured train. They basically run into each other! I've heard people say that the miniature work Derek's crew did for that battle is so good, they're hardly using any full-scale insert shots at all!"

In the offices located behind the portacabin, alongside The Magic Camera Company's fair-sized sound stage, Alan Marques shows me more from *Goldeneye*. We flip through a number of scenes: The Russian satellite being deployed by a rocket, solar panels unfurling as it goes into orbit... Two Russia MiGs tear overhead – "They're completely computer-generated," says Alan, "using the same Lightwave system as *Babylon 5*." A small plane flies close to a mountainside base, then banks away as the whole place explodes, narrowly avoiding being caught in the fireball.

"The exploding base is one of Derek's large-scale miniature shots," explains Alan, as we run through the sequence again. "In the sound stage behind us, we did a motion-control shot of a model Russian plane against a blue screen, then composited it over the explosion. Because we couldn't do a long enough motion-control shot of the model for it to completely disappear, the plane turns into a computer-generated image halfway through, as it moves away from the camera."

This sort of mixing of computer-generated work with models and live action stuff (often all three in the same shot) is now becoming more common, despite a certain scepticism among some film producers and directors – on this side of the Atlantic, at least. "We hope the stuff that we, and another company called The Moving Picture Company, have done on *Goldeneye* will help educate people a little bit," says Marques. "The great thing about modern digitial effects is that these days all the software and hardware we use is off the shelf – you can just go out there, buy a machine, collect your software, and away you go. Sure, you still need an operator who knows what they're doing, but you don't have to write your own code or anything...

"Development of equipment like the *Matador* 2D paint system, used by Steve Begg to do his lightning animation, has been driven by digital effects houses, in particular Industrial Light & Magic, who have around 150 licences for the thing. The software for systems like this gets updated about once a month, so it's a very fast-moving business. The only problem is that the equipment costs such a lot, and goes out of date so quickly, that you have to be using it all the time to earn enough money to pay for its replacement, when that comes down the road in eight or so years' time."

Later on, we're talking about other bits from the new Bond film. What will Dame Judi Dench be like as the new M? How cool (and gadget-packed) will 007's BMW Z3 roadster be? Just how spectacular is the opening bungee jump stunt, where Bond and Trevalyian (006) bounce down a waterfall? And what about the boa constrictor-like Russian agent, played by Famke Janssen? They're all questions I can't wait to hear the answers to – sentiments shared, it would seem, by the Magic Camera Company crew. Driving out of the Shepperton gates, I realise I've not wanted to to see a film this badly since... Oh shit. Since *Judge Dredd*. It's a thought I manage to push from my mind by the time I hit the motorway...

Goldeneye *goes on nationwide release on 24 November. We'll have a full review in next month's issue.*

"GARIBALDI'S A GUY YOU CAN COUNT ON. YOU KNOW HE'LL ALWAYS BE THERE. HE'LL TAKE CARE OF OTHER PEOPLE'S NEEDS BEFORE HIS OWN."
JERRY DOYLE (GARIBALDI)

NOBODY'S HEROES

DESPITE THEIR COOL ON-SCREEN RELATIONSHIP, JERRY DOYLE AND ANDREA THOMPSON – BABYLON 5'S HARD-BOILED SECURITY CHIEF AND SENSITIVE TELEPATH – MAKE THE PERFECT COUPLE IN REAL LIFE, FOREVER TOUCHING EACH OTHER, FINISHING EACH OTHER'S SENTENCES, AND GENERALLY MESSING AROUND. WHAT THEY WON'T DO, AS **MATT BIELBY** DISCOVERED, IS REVEAL TOO MUCH ABOUT THE DIRECTION THE SHOW IS TAKING. DAMMIT.

He's full of deadpan one-liners is Jerry Doyle, the actor who plays *Babylon 5's* cynical, hard-working security chief Michael Garibaldi. When asked if he and co-star Andrea Thompson were a couple before they started working together on the show, he answers, "At least for one day" – it turns out that Andrea was actually pregnant when he shot the pilot episode, you see. "We have a three year old, so you do the math!" she laughs.

And when asked what his favourite scene in the show so far has been, Jerry quips, "The first episode of the second season, where I was in a coma. I said nothing, and I got paid full salary. As the producer said, it was some of my best work." Yes, Jerry Doyle is a funny man.

Funny ha ha, but funny unusual too. After all, his hasn't exactly been a typical actor's career. Previously, he was a Wall Street broker – a career he pursued throughout the '80s – and a jet plane salesman. At college, he studied aeronautical science. Happy-go-lucky, he seems to quit each job when he stops enjoying himself, eventually arriving in Hollywood in 1990 where – inexperienced as an actor – he quickly landed jobs on shows like the daytime soap *The Bold and the Beautiful* and *Duckman,* before arriving on *Babylon 5*. Somewhere along the line he met Andrea Thompson, a successful soap and film actress, and the rest is history...

CURRENTLY, OF COURSE, WE'RE IN THIS ODD situation where British *Babylon 5* fans have seen the excellent final four episodes of the show's second season, while Americans have been forced to wait, victims of a ratings war which sees networks holding back the final episodes of popular series so they can use them as a run-in to the new season. It must be frustrating as hell...

"Yeah, we won't be seeing those episodes until, I think, the first week of November," sighs Jerry. "Then it's right into season three. It is sort of annoying, but we're used to it – they did something similar at the end of the first season too. Not that I can really criticise the guys who make these decisions, because if I had my way we'd do things completely differently, and probably not be on the air at all!"

Let's cut right to the core of the issue. How much can you tell us about season three?

"I can't say a thing."

"We're not allowed to give away the storyline," Andrea explains, "and we wouldn't want to anyway."

I know, but *come on.* You must be able to do better than that...

"Well, okay," says Jerry, speaking very carefully. "If you look at what took shape in season two, with good guys becoming bad guys and bad guys becoming good guys, you can tell that there's this massive build-up taking place on two polar opposites, and that it's ultimately going to lead to conflict. What part we play in this, I can't say. But I can say that a lot of things are being changed this season – the scripts are moving *really* fast."

That's about as much as I could expect, I guess . Okay, then tell me some practical, day-to-day things. Where are you up to on the third series? Is it going well?

"Well, yesterday, we began shooting the fourth episode, then we broke for the weekend, and start filming again on Tuesday. We started filming season three on 31 July, and we shoot each episode in seven days, take the weekends off, and just keep rolling. We wrap about 15 April next year. Then we get the Summer off."

And are you planning to do stuff during the Summer break?

"Like films? Nah, we like to travel. We have a three year old, and when we get three months off we just want to travel, hang out with the family, and do fun stuff."

WE TALK ABOUT J MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI'S grand plan. How much do you – the actors – know yourselves what's going on?

"We get pieces of the plot," says Jerry. "But I pretty much just read it script by script. I mean, I've already received scripts seven and eight, but I haven't actually looked at 'em yet."

"Everyone seems to be under the impression that we know what the entire arc

Craig Stennett

"I THINK TALIA'S VERY DIFFERENT TO ME. I'M MUCH MORE EXPANSIVE THAN SHE IS, AND FAR LESS SECRETIVE AND VULNERABLE."

ANDREA THOMPSON (TALIA WINTERS)

of our characters is," elaborates Andrea, "but we don't. Joe tells us bits, and generally if he says something he'll stick with it, but then he'll throw in other things that change everything..."

"Not telling the whole story isn't a lie," laughs Jerry. "He says, 'Sure I told you that, but I didn't tell you *this*...' At one point he said he's got the whole thing planned in his head and on his computer, triple encrypted. I don't think he even tells his wife!"

One of the big shock revelations at the end of the second season was that the shy, vulnerable "commercial telepath" Talia Winters, was, in fact, a PsiCorps sleeper agent. The truth about Talia was a big surprise to the *Babylon 5* crew, the vast majority of viewers – and even to the actress who plays her!

"I didn't find out until I read the script for that episode," Andrea reveals. "It was a real shock. I still can't help wondering, though, if there's some way in which this turning traitor thing is not all it appears to be? Will Talia really remain loyal to the PsiCorps? Although I don't know for sure, I'm convinced what we're seeing is just one small part of the big picture..."

Now that Talia is on the "wrong side," is she scared she'll be written out of the show, only appearing in the odd episode or two?

"Not really – there've always been periods where you don't appear for a while, but it doesn't mean your character is dead or anything. It's just that Joe has got all these other plot threads to deal with. This is a huge juggling act – he's got 20 or so major characters he's trying to keep spinning all the time, and you can't have them all in every episode. Just because Jerry's paid for 22 episodes a season doesn't mean he's going to appear in all 22, you know? You find you're in just as many as Joe needs to tell his story. That's what makes *Babylon 5* so different."

As, perhaps, a fairly ordinary member of the *Babylon 5* audience, I've found myself enjoying it much more during the second season. The first year I could pretty much take it or leave it, but now I can't wait for the start of season three. Is that a typical response?

"I think Joe used the first year to lay out the back story, set up the premise, and introduce the characters," says Jerry. "But now he's defined the conflicts it's just a matter of putting it all into motion. For my money the scripts this year move faster, and are tighter, than they were last year. I'm not saying last year's were bad, but these are better."

The only downside I can see is that, as a story, it seems to be getting more complicated. Is there a danger this will put off new viewers?

"I guess. Even for me it's like, what's that thing? Who's that person? Where'd he come from? Oh, yeah, I remember now..."

"The thing is, though," adds Andrea, "Joe still insists each show be self-contained, so that even if you haven't seen *Babylon 5* before, the one you see will make sense. It's a tall order, but he's doing it. It's a hell of a piece of work."

"And I think," adds Jerry, "that for true aficionados, the complexity is what makes it so brilliant. They're more blown away than they could have hoped by the intricacies of the script – in every episode there's a new twist."

I wonder about the characters of Garibaldi and Talia. How much of what they – and the other major players in the show – are like was written in stone by JM Straczynski before *Babylon 5* started filming, and how much did the actors develop themselves?

"We weren't given much to go on at first," says Jerry. "At the beginning of the first year the writers sat us all down and asked us, 'What's your family life like? What's your favourite colour?' Then they started to incorporate those personality traits into the characters. And the more they work with you, the more they learn your speech patterns. Garibaldi, for instance, will never say, 'I will not be there.' He says, 'won't,' 'don't,' 'gonna,' 'shouldn't,' 'can't.' He always talks real fast."

So something like Garibaldi's love of old Warner Bros cartoons came from stuff you told them?

"Er, no, actually – they just put that in because Warner Bros decided that my character would make a good merchandising tool. It's the same with the motorcycle. We got Kawasaki as one of our sponsors, so all of a sudden Garibaldi had this motorcycle he'd been building for five years in his quarters. I don't know where – his quarters are tiny, so you would have seen it in 700 pieces in the corner of the room! I'm just glad Barnum and Bailey's Circus didn't become a sponsor, or I might have ended up with elephants in my room... And you know how hard *that* is to clean up!"

"The good thing, though," says Andrea, "is that Joe can be really flexible. Take, for instance, the episode where I take my gloves off. Up until that point there'd been this big taboo about me never taking my gloves off, but because I was spilling my heart to Ivanova – it was such an emotionally naked moment – I thought it'd play better if this was the one time where I *did* remove them. We called down to the office to ask Joe if we could do it. He wasn't in, so we shot it both ways – and Joe went for 'gloves off,' because he felt it was true to the character. The thing is that he'll listen to you, and if it doesn't make sense to him he'll veto it. But he won't just *automatically* veto things..."

So, at this stage, two-and-a-bit seasons in, how much would you say your characters are like yourselves? Andrea speaks first:

"I think Talia's very different to me. I'm much more expansive than she is, and far less secretive and vulnerable. She's a super-sensitive person, and up to this point she's struck me as not being very brave. But that's what's been lovely playing her – it's not the sort of role I would have been considered for in the past."

"With the exception of being a recovering alcoholic, I *am* Garibaldi. And that's about it," says Jerry. "I'm just as cynical."

"Yeah, he is," smiles Andrea, then rethinks. "No, actually you're not totally like Garibaldi. You're a lot warmer, a lot softer in a lot of ways. And you take more chances in your personal life than Garibaldi does."

"That's true," admits Jerry. "Garibaldi's hiding certain things from the world, and because you're not seeing him in a relationship, they're not coming out. If he was with someone, I think you'd see other facets to the character..."

And the stop/start romance between the two characters – has that got any chance now that Talia's on "the other side"?

"They're some of my favourite bits of the show – I get to chase after Andrea, which is great. But as for whether it can still go somewhere now? You never know..."

We're running out of time, but one thing I find interesting about Garibaldi is that, despite being a major character, he's never been *directly* involved in any of the big storylines...

"Yeah, but I have all the pieces of the puzzle. I think maybe Bruce Boxleitner [Captain Sheridan] and I are the only two characters who have all the pieces. I've got my own agenda, of course – I have to know everything, because I'm effectively the law on Babylon 5 – but more important is the fact that Garibaldi's a guy you can count on. You know he'll always be there. He'll take care of other people's needs before his own."

You make him sound like a tragic hero...

"There's a line in one of the first shows where Garibaldi says 'I've never been a hero,' and it makes you think he might get a chance to be one somewhere down the line. Some of the other things that have happened, like the flash-forward, would support that too..."

You can find out whether Garibaldi gets to be a hero or not, and whether Talia sees the error of her ways, when season three of Babylon 5 *returns to Channel 4 next year.*

"THE SCRIPTS THIS YEAR MOVE FASTER, AND ARE TIGHTER, THAN THEY WERE LAST YEAR. I'M NOT SAYING LAST YEAR'S WERE BAD, BUT THESE ARE BETTER..."

JERRY DOYLE (GARIBALDI)

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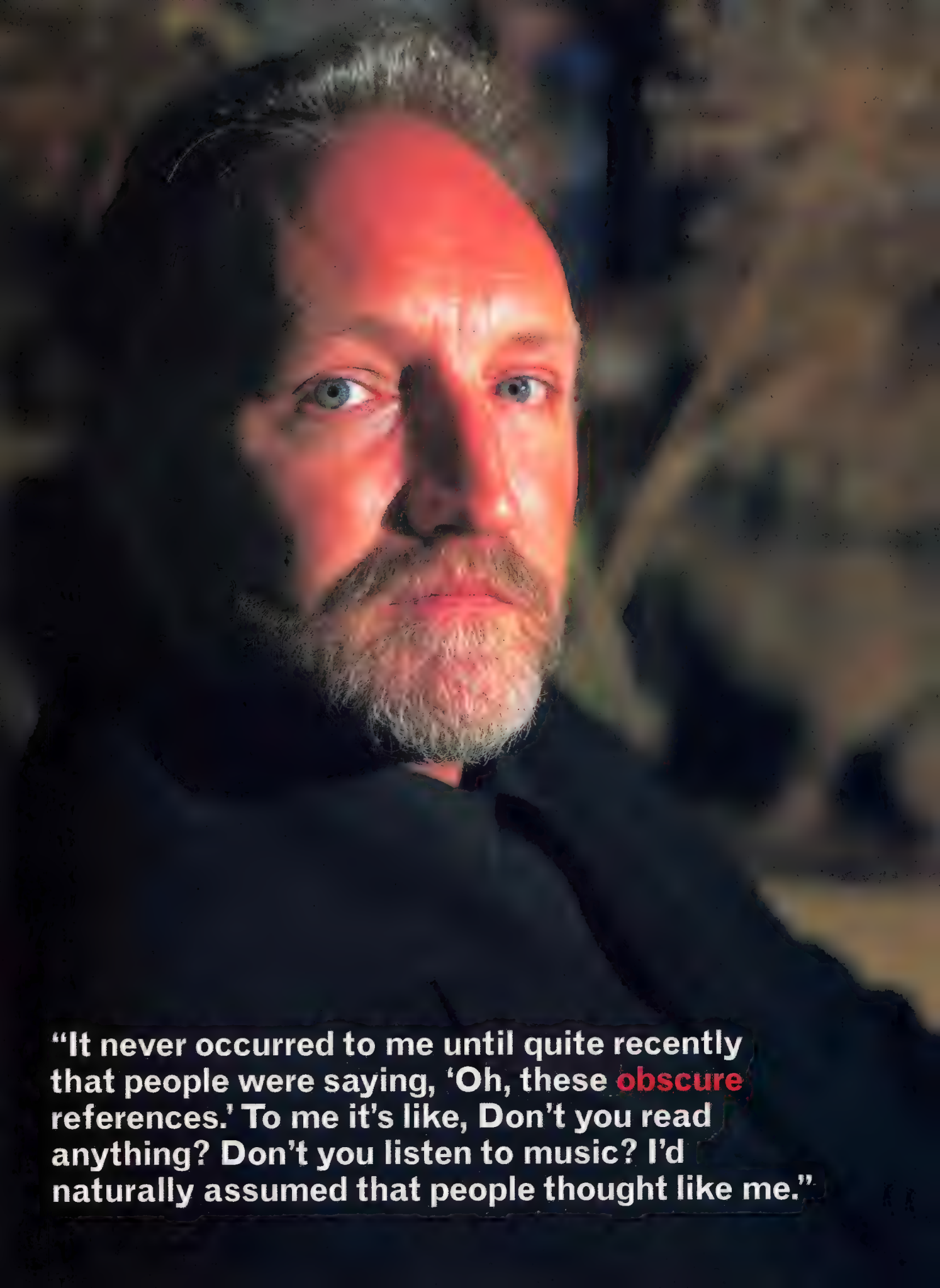


"It never occurred to me until quite recently that people were saying, 'Oh, these obscure references.' To me it's like, Don't you read anything? Don't you listen to music? I'd naturally assumed that people thought like me."

TALL STORIES

He can't stand the taste of sprouts, but writes about them anyway. He founded Britain's largest poetry group by mistake. He writes funny, hugely popular science fiction novels set in Brentford. He's got a turtle with a crocodile's head. Is he (a) Robert Rankin, (b) bonkers, (c) talking to **MJ Simpson**, or (d) all of the above? Answer at the bottom of the page...

One of the prominent publishing trends of recent years – certainly as far as science fiction and fantasy is concerned – has been the rise of the funny novel. Although humorous SF is nothing new – Robert Sheckley and Harry Harrison, for example, have been at it for years – the man we have to thank for the current revival is a certain Terry Pratchett. Since his Discworld novels really took off towards the tail-end of the '80s, the floodgates have been well and truly open...

This said, not *every* humorous SF or fantasy writer owes much of a debt to Pratchett. Robert Rankin, for instance, has never written anything except amusing science fiction, beginning with *The Antipope* in 1981 (though, admittedly, it was only with 1990's *Armageddon The Musical* that he started to make a name for himself). His novels are a different kettle of fish too. Seeing as he's just published his twelfth, *The Garden of Unearthly Delights (Reviewed last issue – Ed)*, this seemed as good a time as any to visit the Rankin cottage in the wilds of Darkest Sussex to find out about sprouts, Brentford, and the origins of Mr Hugo Rune...

Robert Rankin's home is a charming little country dwelling, stuck down an impossibly narrow lane in the middle of nowhere. There's an Aga, a cat, and some children's toys; nothing out of the ordinary. Then Robert leads you into his study, and suddenly you're in another world. Arcane tomes and grimoires line one wall; a framed collection of early Zippo lighters stares across the room at a cheque autographed by Uri Geller; human bones litter the desk. And everywhere there are antique stuffed animals:

Chez Robert Rankin, near Brighton, just up the road from James Herbert – who owns *two* Aleister Crowley chairs!

Photo: Peter Stone

A cobra wrapped around a mongoose; an accordion-playing ferret; a turtle with a crocodile's head (it's fake); an eight-legged lamb (it's real) and... What *is* this stuff?

"It's my father's fault," Robert explains, settling into his writing chair. "When I was a kid, he used to take us on holiday, but he'd only take us to places that had good museums, because he was obsessed by them. He used to say, 'The most interesting stuff's downstairs, lad. Get the curator to take us there,' and down there would be all the stuff that they couldn't show – things like shrunken heads and animals with eight legs and all that stuff. So it started off with him."

He sounds quite a character, your dad.

"He was. He'd give me things – he gave me that whale's tooth over there. When we were at infant's school, everybody had to say what their father did for a living, so I told the teacher what my father did. On open day, she said, 'Mr Rankin, could you come to the school and give a talk?' My dad, who was a carpenter, asked why, and she said, 'Well, you're the only whaler we've ever had'! He'd told me about whaling, you see, and I'd told the teacher. Being my father, he actually came up and gave the school a talk about whaling! And I was a real hero. So this collection started off with him. The tall stories and the whole thing, he's to blame."

"Tall stories" is the key phrase here. Rankin's books are eccentric, rambling tales which nevertheless seem to make sense. Whereas some humorists, like Pratchett and Douglas Adams, use their fantasy worlds to reflect upon reality, and the likes of Piers Anthony or Craig Shaw Gardner simply spoof the genre, Rankin's universe parallels neither fact nor standard fiction. Taking off from the humble reality of Brentford or Brighton, his stories go tumbling into a completely unpredictable and dangerously crazy universe entirely of his own devising...

There have always been tall storytellers in human society. In more primitive times, however, a tall storyteller of Robert Rankin's calibre would have been either venerated as a high priest or chased out to sea in a canoe. It is only thanks to Mr Caxton, Ms

Answer: (D) of course...

(Above) Robert Fleming Rankin (the second): Author, eccentric, collector, Elvis impersonator, kitchen-builder, *Fortean*-ist, and sprout-hater. (Right) Time for a drag...

Transworld and the man who invented exercise books that we can enjoy these tall tales in book form at all.

Returning to the subject of Robert's dad: Robert Rankin Snr crops up in his son's later books as that consummate master of all things weird, Hugo Rune.

"He's a cross between my dad and Aleister Crowley," he explains. "My dad being this great storyteller, and Crowley being... Have you ever read him? If you read his confessions, the *Autohagiography* it's wonderful. The entire book is this pompous oaf telling everyone about himself. He could write so well, and he just slags everybody on the face of the earth because they're not as intelligent as he is, and he knows everything about everything. His lifestyle may have been unpleasant, but he was an extremely interesting man.

"My old man actually met him in a pub in Richmond during the Second World War. He thought Crowley was the greatest poet of the age, and Crowley signed two privately printed books to my dad. And, of course, when my dad first told me about this, he said, 'I've got those books somewhere.' And my mum said, 'No, you haven't – I burned them!' She was a fundamentalist Christian, you see, and didn't like Mr Crowley at all."

The Rankin writing style is somewhat unusual. Eschewing the wonders of the word processor – "How could I have a word processor in here? It'd look pretty stupid!" – he writes in long-hand in exercise books. One advantage of this approach is that he can create his work in a conducive environment. Or, to put it bluntly, down the pub.

"4,000 words to an exercise book; 20 exercise books equals a novel. I'm on number 13 of my new novel at the moment. I've found a woman up the road who types, so I don't even have to have a typewriter – it's perfect. And having always written in pubs, it's the only way I know. Mind you, when I first moved here, the buggers wouldn't have it. They *talked* to me: 'What are you doing? What are you writing? What's that?'"

Is that how you started writing? In pubs?

"No, I was working in a place called Molem's," he recalls. "I had one of those jobs where you get papers in the morning, you move them to another tray, and then somebody else takes them in the evening. I had the day to myself basically, so I used to write short stories and poems and things, then I'd go out drinking with a mate of mine on Wednesdays. If he laughed at the stories, we'd keep them; if he didn't, we'd throw them away. Christ knows how many got thrown away, but lots! He eventually persuaded me to type them up, see if I could sell them.

"Then I met Alan Aldrige, the '60s illustrator who did things like *The Butterfly Ball* and *The Peacock Party* – he was quite famous at the time. He was setting up a thing which was going to be like Apple, called Aurelia Enterprises, and he was looking for writers. So he looked at the short stories, took them round a couple of publishers, and they said, 'If you can get this bloke to write a novel, then we'll be interested.' He came back to me and said, 'If you can write a novel, I'll sell it for you, I promise.' I said, 'Great!', so I sat down for about four or five months and wrote *The Antipope*. At that time it was 120,000 words; I didn't realise that a novel is actually 80,000 words long. Pan liked it, and

Take care in Robert Rankin's kitchen – this is the man who once knocked a cup of coffee over Freddie Mercury.

said they'd publish it, then chopped 40,000 words out of it – with an axe. It's got some interesting continuity errors, that book."

And the short stories?

"I've fed them into all the books. They'd all gone by the time the first four books were written. All those little bits that don't make any sense, all those little asides, were my stories.The first books were all based on everybody I knew in Brentford, so it was easy to write them."

Ah yes, Brentford. The sleepy London suburb is the setting for Robert's Brentford trilogy – *The Antipope, The Brentford Triangle* and *East of Ealing* – and its sequel *The Sprouts of Wrath*. And it was while living in Brentford that Robert set up the now legendary "Brentford Poets" group...

"I was interviewed by a magazine, and they said, 'Do you know anything about this arts centre they're building in Brentford?' I said, 'Don't be ridiculous. Nobody would go there,' and they asked me to go along and interview the director. So I went along and he offered me a job. He said, 'How would you like to be Writer in Residence?' I said, 'That sounds grand. What do I do?' And he said, 'I dunno, we'll make up something.'"

So what *did* you have to do?

"I wrote two plays – one of them was *Armageddon The Musical*, which later became the book – and I started off this poetry group. The first week, four people came along, the next week there were a few more, then a few more. By the time we'd been running it for six months there were about 45 people there. It turned out the reason they were all coming was because the woman behind the bar had said, 'It's called Pints & Poets. Does that mean that everybody who reads a poem gets a pint?', and I'd said, 'Yeah.'

"When the director found out he said, 'What the fuck are you doing?', but it was bringing them in, so they all got their pint of beer. This lasted for two years, and it became the biggest poetry group in England."

One problem attached to being an eccentric and distinctive writer is that publishers and bookshops like to be able to classify their merchandise – if they don't know what to do with it, they most likely won't do anything at all. Certainly, when *The Antipope* was first published, nobody knew quite what to make of it.

"When I set out to write, all I wanted to do was write Robert Rankin books. When people like Flann O'Brien and Saki were writing, you couldn't pigeon-hole them. I mean, how do you pigeon-hole William Burroughs? He writes William Burroughs books. He's Burroughs-esque. So I wanted to be Rankinesque. But it was quite evident when the first ones came out, and they went into the general fiction section, that they were lost. The big question then was, 'What do we call these books? Are they science fiction?'

"You see, science fiction people, for the most part, don't go into the general fiction section. It's like being a heavy metal fan; you pass the Take That counter straight away! So after the Brentford books, when we went into the *Armageddon* trilogy, I decided, 'I'm doing science fiction; I can't get away from that.'"

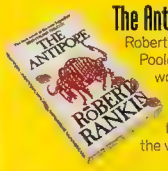
And suddenly they started to sell.

If Rankin's oeuvre is notorious for anything, it's the wonderfully obscure references to popular culture and history which pepper his books. For example, there's a minor aspect of *Armageddon The Musical* which will only make sense if you are familiar with the song 'Debbie Gibson Is Pregnant With My Two-Headed Love Child' by Mojo Nixon and Skid Roper. (We're not making this up – it's on the album *Root Hog or*

"4,000 words to an exercise book; 20 exercise books equals a novel. I'm on number 13 of my new novel at the moment. I've found a woman up the road who types, so I don't even have to have a typewriter – it's perfect."

The SFX Guide to the best of Robert Rankin

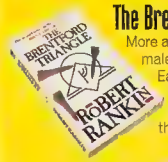
Summing up what a Robert Rankin book is all about in a few sentences is nigh on impossible, even for the man himself, as the less than pithy comments below demonstrate...



The Antipope

Robert's first book introduced the world to Pooley and Omally, two strenuously work-shy individuals whose lives are regulated by the opening hours of The Flying Swan, Brentford. Here they encounter a demonic threat to the world from a medieval despot.

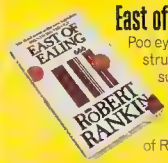
Rankin: "Somebody had told me this word, 'Antipope,' and I thought, 'That's a good name for a book, isn't it? Well, who's the worst Pope in the world?' And I looked him up and it was good old Rodrigo Borgia, a prize bastard. I thought, 'Well, that's it. Let's write a book about the reincarnation of the prize bastard Pope.'"



The Brentford Triangle

More adventures for Pooley and Omally, as malevolent extra-terrestrials threaten Earth via the new *Captain Laser Alien Attack* machine in The Flying Swan. This book introduced the world to the sport of Allotment Golf

Rankin: "I had this dream that I'd seen these blokes try to dismantle the pyramids, and as they did the world went Whoosh! I was saying, 'Put them back! It's keeping it on trim!' So that book was based around this one theory: Could the Great Pyramid of Giza be keeping the Earth on trim?"



East of Ealing

Pooley, Omally and Sherlock Holmes (!) struggle to prevent humanity's subjugation by the super-computers Lateinos and Romiith. Plans to barcode the entire population of the planet are foretold in the Book of Revelations. Apparently.

Rankin: "Barcodes were really coming into their own then, and my mum, the fundamentalist Christian, was saying, 'It's the mark of the Beast!', and I said, 'No, no, no.' Then recently somebody showed me that those two narrow lines, of which there are three pairs on every bar code, *do* mean six! The fucking thing *is* 666! I thought, 'Damn me!' It's entirely down to my personal Luddite attitude to technology."

Armageddon The Musical

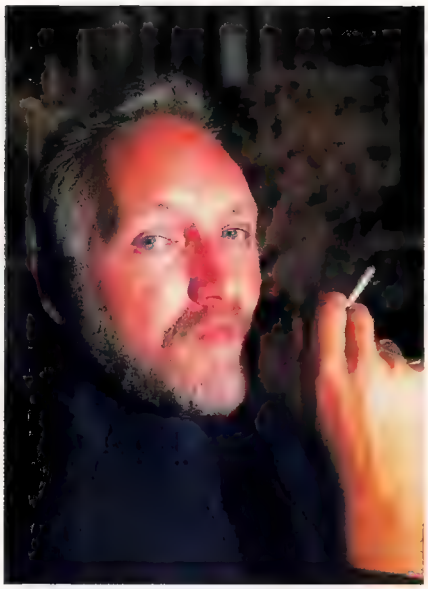
The Presliad: The enthralling adventures of Elvis Aaron Presley and Barry, the talking, time-travelling sprout, as they discover that the whole of human history is one huge, artificially staged TV soap opera for extra-terrestrials.

Rankin: "This was from the stage play. My first publisher had gone somewhere else, which was Abacus. He said, 'What have you got in mind?', and I said, 'Come and see this play.' Afterwards I said, 'That play was crap, wasn't it?' He said, 'Well, it wasn't very good.' I said, 'Yes, but as a book it'd be brilliant.'"

They Came & Ate Us: Armageddon II The B Movie

To the best of my knowledge, no reviewer has ever successfully encapsulated this story. It involves Rex Mundi, plus Fido the Dog doing Frankie Howerd impressions, and, of course, Elvis and Barry.

Rankin: "I never liked Elvis 'til he was dead. But when Elvis was dead I liked him a lot. When he started appearing at supermarkets, I thought, 'This is great. I like *this* Elvis.' So really the *Armageddon* trilogy was homage to the dead Elvis. Elvis as an icon."



Call *The Fortean Times!* When we developed this photo of Rankin's home, we found this ghostly image of the author.

Die.) However, the book is so structured that not knowing the song won't spoil your enjoyment. And you'll probably spot another reference in there that the rest of us will have missed anyway. Rankin certainly defends his esoteric in-jokes.

"I'm always accused by people who don't get the joke of being obscure, but the point is that that's the world I live in. I've got all these albums, I've got all these books, and I've seen all these films. So it never occurred to me until quite recently that people were saying, 'Oh, these obscure references.' To me it's like, 'Don't you read anything? Don't you listen to music?' I'd naturally assumed that people thought like me."

As a natural extension of this, Rankin's next book will feature a DIY soundtrack!

"There's all these films, and they've always got a soundtrack album," he explains. "So I thought it's about time there was a book with a soundtrack album. You'll have to make this tape up yourself, and you can play it as you damn well please... Some of the tracks are going to be right bastards to find!"

Considering the popularity of Robert's books, it's surprising we've never seen them adapted for other media.

"Well, every year I sell the rights to the TV," he sighs, "but nobody ever makes them. Yorkshire Television wanted to do *The Antipope*, so I spoke to the publishers about adapting it myself, and they said, 'Don't do it. For one thing, you're commissioned to write these books, and you haven't got time. The other thing is, chances are it'll never happen. You'll have wasted a whole load of months on this thing. If they're really serious, they'll get you a proper scriptwriter.'

"Before *Armageddon* and the later ones came out, I made more money out of selling my books for films and things than I ever made out of publishing them! It was embarrassing. I'd go along to a lunch and somebody would give me cheque for 1,000 quid. I thought, 'Bastard. I only got paid 1,500 quid for *The Antipope*.' It's ridiculous.

"The other thing is, every time I get somebody interested, they go, 'Ooh, big budget, big special effects budget.' I say, 'Don't do it! Say small budget, black and white, B-movie...' They say, 'Oh no!', ask for millions of pounds, and, of course, people tell them to piss off. I got near with Joe Dante. A fax came from Renfield Productions: Joe Dante was going to buy *Armageddon,* and do you know why he couldn't? Because the Presley Foundation refused to allow Elvis Presley to be used in that context."

And so Robert Rankin sticks to what he knows: Writing hilarious, imaginative, freewheeling novels. Two a year. In exercise books. Surrounded by his eight-legged lambs and accordion-playing ferrets.

"The one I'm writing at the moment is called *A Dog Called Demolition.* Do you read *The Fortean Times?* Let me get it on record: It's my Bible. I read this article about a multiple personality disorder. There's this criminal who cut up and disembowelled his girlfriend. He said that he was ordered to do this by the entities inside his head – and his 'voices' were 'a god called Zygor, the voice of George, and a dog called Demolition.'

"And I thought, 'Shit! *A Dog Called Demolition,* what a great name for a book!' So what happens to these entities in your head when you go off to prison? They have a tendency to bugger off, don't they? I mean, Peter Sutcliffe has never mentioned voices in his head now he's in prison. The entities say, 'I'm not spending the rest of my time here. Let's go find someone else.' So I started thinking about what would happen if these entities came to Britain for a holiday, and built it from there. It's due out in April."

13 exercise books down, seven to go.

"I thought it's about time there was a book with a soundtrack album. You'll have to make this up yourself, and you can play it as you damn well please... Some of the tracks are going to be right bastards to find!"

The Suburban Book of the Dead: Armageddon III The Remake

Rex Mundi! Elvis! Christ's rarely-mentioned twin sister, Christeen! Hack writer Lazlo Woodbine! Barry the time-sprout! Christ (and indeed, Christeen) knows what this one is actually about, but it's brilliant!

Rankin: "As I started writing this book, I thought, 'Hey, let's do *The Prisoner.* Let's make a book that's full of gags, full of this and that – but it doesn't actually make any sense. And let's see if we can get away with it.'"

The Book of Ultimate Truths

Cornelius Murphy and his small friend Tuppe attempt to save the world by publishing the unexpurgated version of *The Book of Ultimate Truths,* the meisterwork of Hugo Rune ("the guru's guru").

Rankin: "Originally, it was going to be this big encyclopaedia of Hugo Rune stuff, but I thought, 'Jesus, it would take forever to try to come up with an alternative theory for everything?' So it never came off, and instead it became this book. My 17 year old son wanted to be the star of this one, so I based Cornelius Murphy on him."

The Greatest Show Off Earth

A new cast of characters counter yet another global threat. Simon stands accused of serial murders, and faces the wrath of a demonic chicken, Sate-Hen. Meanwhile, his friend Raymond has been kidnapped by extra-terrestrials and ends up in Professor Merlin's incredible interplanetary circus.

Rankin: "This was basically Rankin moves to the country and finds it's just like Brentford. Except, back in Brentford, people laughed when they saw themselves in my books. Down here, they didn't laugh. I had the windscreen shot out of my car for this. And the chicken farmer told me later that he *did* screw the chickens!"

The Most Amazing Man Who Ever Lived

A tale of pre-incarnation, i.e. rebirth on one's original birthdate with all one's memories intact. What a great way to become the master of the world! Also features mass-electrolysis of the sea off Brighton.

MJS: *"There's a bit in here where it's extremely obvious that you had just acquired* The Wordsworth Dictionary of Sex!"
Rankin: "Isn't it a killer? You can't find those words anywhere else! When those books all came out at £1.99, I bought the lot. Perhaps we ought to put in a little asterisk – you know, credit the dictionary – at the bottom of the page."

The Garden of Unearthly Delights

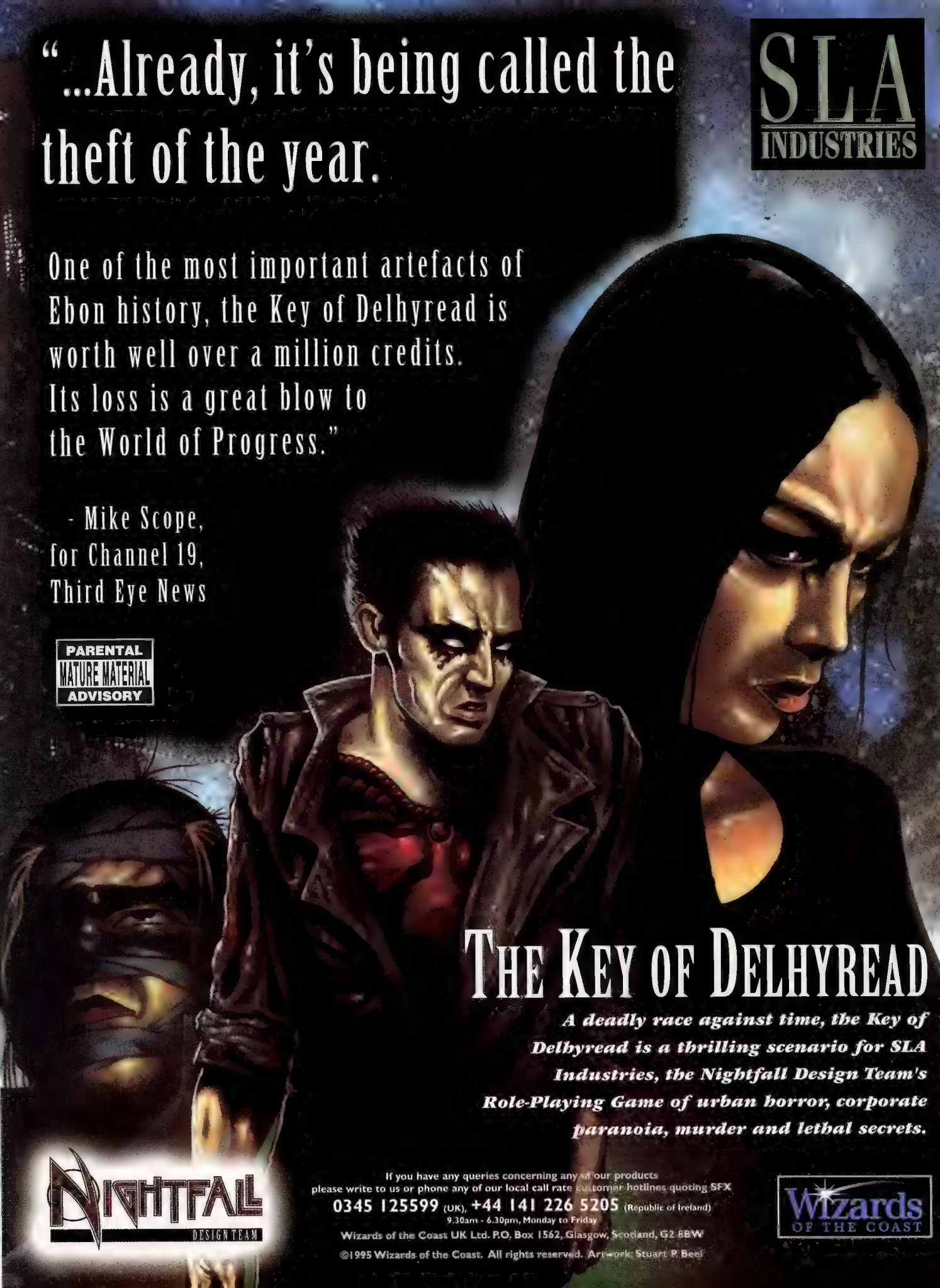
Max Carrion, Imagineer, finds himself thrust into the far future, a world where magic rules, society is feudal, and the buses nearly run on time.

Rankin: "When I grew up with science fiction, my favourite writer was Jack Vance. He wrote two books which were set in a time when the sun was going dim, and the world returned to magic. But they were very funny. For years, I thought: 'One day I'd like to write a book that's a homage to the "Dying Earth" books.' And so this was an attempt to do that. It's the first time I've ever written a story just following one character..."

So where should I start?

"This bloke sounds intriguing," you're saying to yourself, "but where should I start among his back catalogue?"

Well, SFX recommends ***Armageddon: The Musical*** as the first part of Robert's most science-fictional series. The man himself, however, disagrees: "***The Book of Ultimate Truths*** is a good introduction to my work. It's got lots of different ideas in it; it's sort of typical of everything. Of course, I'd prefer people to buy ***The Garden of Unearthly Delights***, but only because it's in hardback and I get a bigger royalty on it. ."


"...Already, it's being called the theft of the year.
SLA INDUSTRIES
One of the most important artefacts of Ebon history, the Key of Delhyread is worth well over a million credits. Its loss is a great blow to the World of Progress."
- Mike Scope, for Channel 19, Third Eye News
PARENTAL MATURE MATERIAL ADVISORY
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LIFE BEGINS AT 40

After 40 years producing miracles on a shoestring for Auntie Beeb, the BBC Visual Effects Department has morphed into a lean, mean contender in the special effects free market. There's more to this team than that infamous "two hairdriers" spaceship, as a won-over **Dave Golder** discovers...

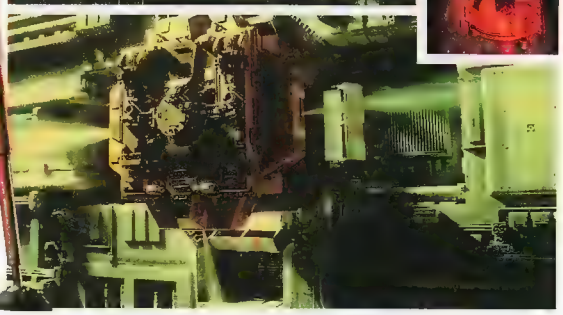
Ever since *Quatermass 2*, way back in 1955, the BBC Visual Effects Department has been churning out special effects at the kind of rate that would send your average Industrial Light and Magic employee screaming to his analyst. Sure, shows like *Doctor Who* and *Blake's 7* have often been soft targets for the cynics, with their wobbly spaceships, curling-tong guns and fuzzy blue-screen work, but the fact is that despite tight budgets, and even tighter time restraints, the BBC Visual Effects team can, and often does, turn out brilliant work. *Red Dwarf*, and critically acclaimed non-SF fare like *Edge of Darkness* and *Casualty*, is proof of this.

Still, as current BBC effects designer Mike Tucker explains, it's hard to change people's perceptions, especially when there's a whole generation out there who were brought up watching Mat Irvine on *Swap Shop* demonstate how to make a *Blake's 7* spaceship out of two hairdriers...

"That sort of thing is a side of the job," he explains. "If you're running out of time and money, you make it out of whatever you have lying around. A classic example is in the *Red Dwarf* episode 'Polymorph,' where the pod that held the polymorph was built around an old hoover."

"The problem," adds Alan "Rocky" Marshall, another of the department's current crop of effects men, "is that it builds up the idea that anybody could do the job with a couple of squeezy bottles and some sticky tape, and that's not the case.

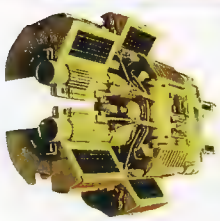
"The Mat Irvine story about the two hairdriers *is* true, but the ship was only used in a brief background shot. It seems to have become almost a modern myth – that that's the only kind of effects we did. But it wasn't true then and it isn't now. The Liberator, The Scorpio, all the Federation ships, all



Above: Nocturnal Tripods look strangely less alien in the light (1984). Below left: Model Triffid farm from *Day of the Triffids* (1981). Below right: Captain Zep's ship was modified from a model Bill Pearson made for an aborted *Dan Dare* project (1983). Bottom: Pearson's escape pod from "Earthshock" *(Doctor Who*, 1982) used parts from a BBC coffee machine for the docking clasps!

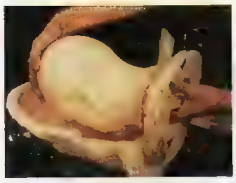
© BBC Visual Effects Department/Mat Irvine

Above: The BBC succeeds where Hollywood fails! While George Pal did away with three-legged aliens in *War of the Worlds*, the Beeb's Tripods actually looked pretty damn impressive.
Left: Effects designer Mike Tucker at work on *Red Dwarf*.
Below left: One of many ships built for *Blake's 7*.



"Some model work is less successful than others because the model's been shot from the wrong angle or at the wrong speed. It's something we don't always have control over."

Mike Tucker, BBC effects designer



The making of the mask for the "frustrated Ena Sharples" version of Davros, used in the *Doctor Who* stories "Resurrection of the Daleks," "Revelation of the Daleks" and "Remembrance of the Daleks." The head cast is of Davros actor Terry Molloy.

Award winners

"I'd like to thank my mum, my dad, my director, but most of all Airfix for making all this possible..."

When it comes to backslapping industry award dinners, the BBC effects team has had its collective back mightily slapped over the last few years. It's won the Royal Television Society's effects award five times in the last six years for shows like ***Red Dwarf***, ***The Return of the Psammead*** and ***Star Cops***.

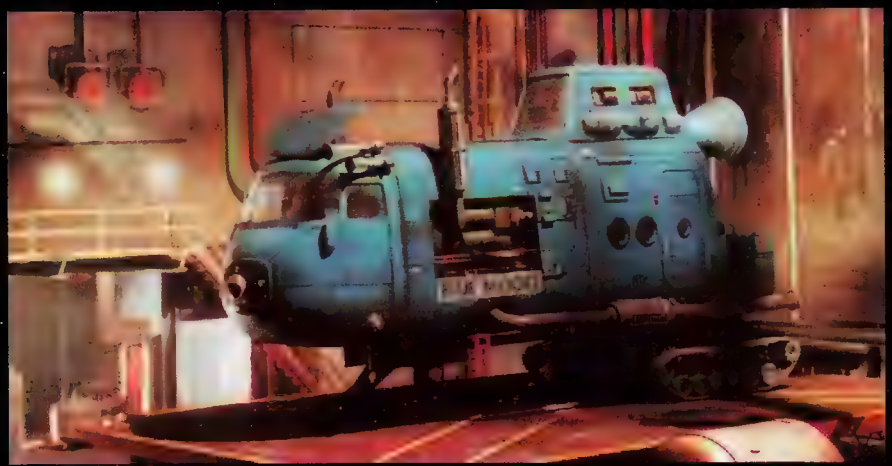
However, despite the fact that there are British Academy awards (BAFTAs) for things like graphic design and make-up, there isn't one for special effects. That's something – unsurprisingly, perhaps – the BBC boys would like to see changed...

Top: The team won a special award for its work on ***QED***. Above: ***Star Cops*** – another winner (effects wise, anyway).

The Return of the Psammead was the sequel to ***Five Children and It***, a BBC children's series based on the E Nesbitt novel. The animatronic star of the show, which compares with much of what the Henson Creature Shop has produced, helped BBC Visual Effects win another RTS award.

"*Red Dwarf* has won the Royal Television Society's award for special effects for seasons three, four and five."

Mike Tucker, BBC effects designer



Red Dwarf has proved that the BBC visual effects team *can* produce quality model work on a par with much bigger budgeted US series. This has resulted in three industry award for the series' effects.

Effects designer Alan "Rocky" Marshall puts the finishing touches to a replicant ship from *Red Dwarf*. Even as a teenager, Marshall was shooting his own effects footage on Super-8.

Mike Tucker admits that a model TARDIS *did* make it into an episode of *Red Dwarf*: "In-jokes like that do happen, but they shouldn't be at the expense of the story."

the featured ships in *Doctor Who* – they were never just random things we stuck together."

"Nearly all the stuff we do is specifically fabricated for the show it ends up in," concludes Marshall.

A PROBLEM THAT TRADITIONALLY FACED BBC EFFECTS DESIGNERS WAS that their work was often shot by cameramen not trained in effects work...

"There *are* people within the BBC who understand model work," says Tucker, cautiously. "But there are also people who don't... There's a myth that, 'Oh, it's just the same as shooting live action, only the things are smaller.' But, in fact, it's a completely different technique. Some model work is much less successful than others because the model's been shot from the wrong angle or at the wrong speed."

Which is what happened with the infamous plane crash in *Casualty*...

"That was shot using a large model, from all the correct angles and at all the right scale speeds," shrugs Marshall. "But during editing, some of the sequence was speeded up, probably with the intention of increasing the tension. However, this had the effect of making a model shot which hadn't looked like a model shot look exactly like a model shot again..."

"I don't think that anyone from our department was at the session where it was edited," says Tucker. "And, unlike a feature film, it's unusual that anyone would be. The *Casualty* crash was an example of an effect where people said, 'Oh, did you see that? It was dreadful,' but, in fact, the amount of time and effort put in to making it work was considerable."

Still, when a special effects shot in a non-SF drama goes right, it can be especially satisfying...

"It's very pleasing when there are little model shots inserted here and there, where people aren't expecting model shots, and nobody notices," Tucker grins. "Mat Irvine's work on *Edge of Darkness,* for example, was great. There are model shots in there which even these days I have trouble spotting. And in *Doctor Who,* the most successful model shot I've been involved with was the big top in 'The Greatest Show in the Galaxy,' because nobody was expecting the big top to be a miniature."

So what other fx would Tucker and Marshall put on their show reels?

"It's difficult to say," muses Tucker. "Are you proudest of something you spent a lot of time and money on, or something you didn't have a lot of time and money for, yet which turned out to be serviceable? For the latter, would definitely say *Space Vets*. We produced over 100 model shots in three days for that show, of which a good 90% were used."

"Personally, though" adds Marshall, "I'm happiest with the bits and pieces I've done for *Red Dwarf* over the years."

RED DWARF HAS BECOME THE DEPARTMENT'S SHOWPIECE, AND NOT JUST because it's the only space opera-style programme currently on the Beeb.

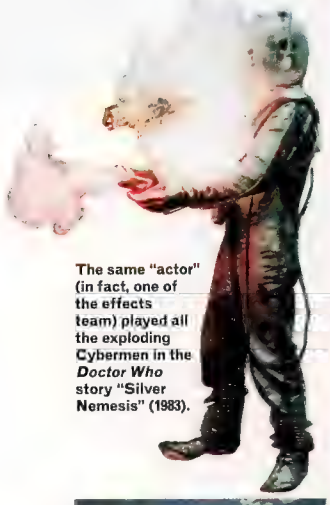
Mat Irvine and his team managed to produce around 100 model shots in three days for the children's series *Space Vets* (1992).

This is what an invisible man looks like – er, if you see what we mean. Designer John Brace also created "mechanical clothes" (which moved with no-one in them) to provide that extra-realistic touch...
Below left: The Dawn Treader from *Chronicles of Narnia.*

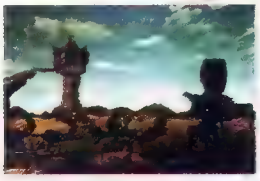
"What we'd like to get away from is the notion that we continually use hairdriers to make spaceships. Nearly all the stuff we do is fabricated specifically for the show it ends up in."

Alan "Rocky" Marshall, BBC effects designer

The Morloch in the *Doctor Who* story "Time Lash" (1985) never consisted of anything more than an animatronic head.



The same "actor" (in fact, one of the effects team) played all the exploding Cybermen in the *Doctor Who* story "Silver Nemesis" (1983).



Story Time, broadcast in the mid '80s, was a bit like *Jackanory* with knobs. Unashamedly the Beeb's answer to Jim Henson's *The Story Teller*, it featured extensive miniature work and some quite complex model sets.

The effects of publicity

THE MAN WHO BECAME KNOWN AS THE FACE OF BBC VISUAL EFFECTS COMES CLEAN ABOUT THOSE HAIRDRIERS...

During the '70s you could have been forgiven for thinking that Mat Irvine was the BBC Visual Effects Department. If you needed someone to appear on *Pebble Mill at One*, *Blue Peter* or *Swap Shop* to demonstrate how to make actors shrink, or build spaceships out of household leftovers, Irvine was your man.

When the PR work allowed, Irvine provided the effects for series like *Doctor Who*, *Blake's 7*, *Tomorrow's World*, *Rent-a-Ghost*, *Space Vets*, *The Singing Detective* and the BBC's most successful drama series ever – *Edge of Darkness*. "I was there 21 years... Man and spider," he says, jokingly referring to Boris, a mechanical arachnid created for the *Doctor Who* story "The Planet of Spiders."

And here we have the final result. Doesn't look too bad really, does it?

Like an indecent number of BBC effects people, he admits that he got into the profession, "by chance." Starting out as a picture researcher for BBC news, he made the move to effects when he "collected together all the photos I'd done of space shots for news, and took them to Jack Kine, then head of the department. This just happened to be in the two-week period when they were looking for someone to help set up the Open University effects department, so I got my chance."

While pointing out that the most bizarre thing he was ever required to do was make a frog jump out of Mr Grace's soup for *Are You Being Served?*, Irvine is in no doubt about his most infamous creation: "The hairdriers which became an alien scout ship in *Blake's 7*. Mind you, if I hadn't given away the fact on *Swap Shop*, no-one would have ever been the wiser..."

Having left the Beeb, Irvine is currently working on various TV projects, and has a book coming out on commercial model kits of factual spacecraft, tenuously tied into an exhibition of the same models at the Science Museum in London.

"But," he adds, "I'm still available." Presumably not for parties and bar mitzvahs, though. At least, not unless you want them to go with a bang...

Matt Irvine models the infamous double-hairdrier scout ship from the second season of *Blake's 7*.

"If I hadn't given away the fact [it was made out of two hairdriers] on *Swap Shop*, no-one would have been the wiser."

Mat Irvine, on *that* spaceship

Lighting camera Paul Wheeler (right) tries to work out how to light the hairdriers to make them look like a spaceship (and prays for a powercut).

The effects team sets up a model explosion. Where possible, if the shots are supposed to be on Earth (or an "Earth-like" planet), they try to film outside. The reason: "added realism."

"It has won the Royal Television Society's Best Special Effects award for seasons three, four and five," boasts Tucker. "In fact, the department has won five out of the last six. Malcolm James won for *The Return of the Psammead,* while Malcolm and Mike Kelt won for *Star Cops*. We also won an additional award for the department's work on *QED*."

This reminds Marshall of a particular grievance: "One of the things that irks us is that we're not eligible for a BAFTA, because there's no TV special effects BAFTA award. If there was, we would have got one."

"I think we had something to prove with *Red Dwarf,*" Tucker continues. "Pete Wragg [senior designer] has always felt that even though it's a comedy, the effects shouldn't be 'funny.' It was a chance to do some really impressive work. And it got to the stage where people were saying, 'Who do you get to the effects for you?' It's assumed we don't do them."

It must have been annoying that, at a time when the department was producing some of its best ever effects on *Doctor Who,* the programme was going through a lull in popularity. Shots like the full-sized shuttlecraft landing in McCoy's "Remembrance of the Daleks" seemed wasted on dwindling audiences...

"I think criticism had become the norm, so we were fighting that before people had even looked at the series," philosophises Tucker.

Marshall agrees: "Cynicism had crept in to the point where it was uppermost in people's minds. The visual effects continually improved; but the ratings didn't. If *Doctor Who* had retained its popularity, the credibility of the department would have risen accordingly."

Surely the problem with *Doctor Who* was that the scripts were often simply too ambitious?

"Sometimes, yes, but you do try to discuss these things with the director," says Tucker.

"Two great monsters are better than six naff ones," adds Marshall.

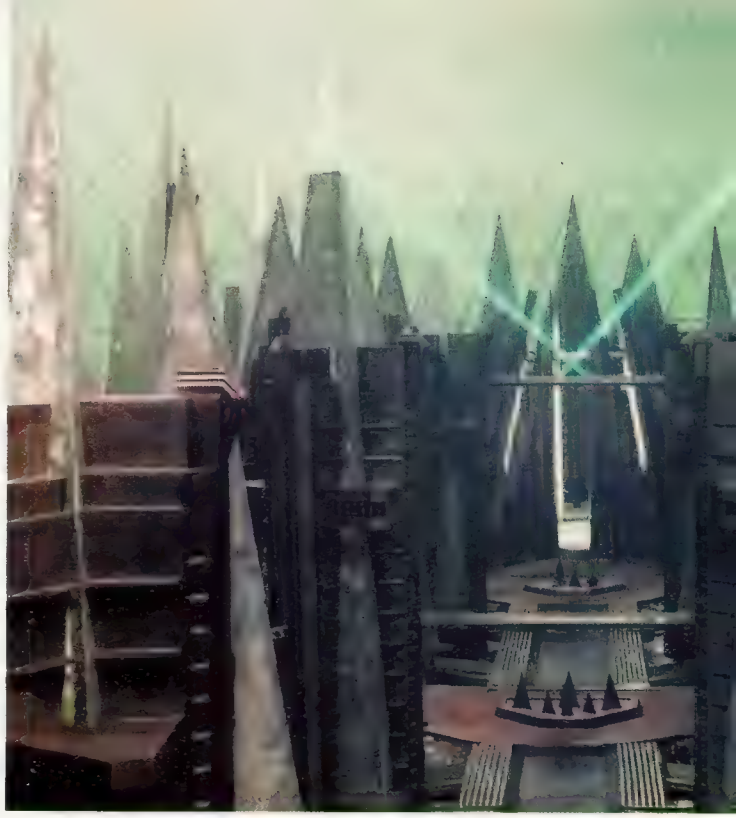
The recent policy changes at the BBC about independent production have proved both a blessing and a curse for the Visual Effects Department. While BBC programmes no longer *need* to use them, the department has now been freed up to look for work outside the BBC. So far it has worked on a number of independent programmes, including *Drop the Dead Donkey, Cracker* and *Wycliffe*. There have also been a few commercials, which proved a bit of a culture shock...

"We spent three days shooting a 30-second commercial for Dutch public transport," explains Tucker. "In three days we're normally expected to complete an entire half-hour TV programme. So, yes, it was a different way of working. We had more filming time, and the advertising agency were getting stuff set up much faster than they were expecting."

So what was it like having to play around with, presumably, a lot more money?

"It didn't work that way," sighs Marshall ruefully. "The reason they came to us is that we're relatively inexpensive. In a marketplace where the overriding criteria is often, 'Are you the cheapest?' there hasn't been a huge difference in the money we have to play with. Working under BBC conditions of never having enough time and money has turned out to have its advantages."

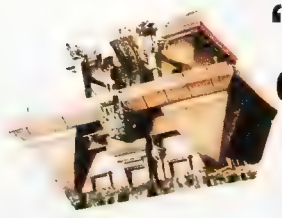
"That's not to say," Tucker quickly adds, "that we wouldn't like to play around with movie-sized budgets!



The visual effect team on season two of *The Tripods* (1985), which included BBC effects stalwarts Steve Bowman and Mike Kelt, who created the impressive Tripods city.

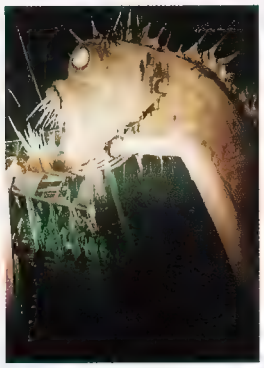
Alice in Wonderland **(left and below) was an early '80s fantasy produced for the *Sunday Classics* slot which featured a huge amount of model work, with actors being placed into the scenery using Colour Separation Overlay (CSO), the BBC's term for the video version of blue screen matte work.**

Far left: The Rani's fortress from *Doctor Who*'s "Time and the Rani" is one of Mike Tucker's personal favourite models.



"One of the things that irks us is that we're not eligible for BAFTA because there is no television special effects BAFTA award. If there was, I feel we would have won one."

Alan "Rocky" Marshall, BBC effects designer



Above: Sea monster shenanigans from the "Voyage of the Dawn Treader" segment of the BBC's never completed adaptation of *The Chronicles of Narnia.*

Right: Sutekh from the early Tom Baker *Doctor Who* story "The Pyramids of Mars," complete with ready-to-glow eyes.

Before, during and after effects

ALAN MARSHALL AND MIKE TUCKER PROVIDE A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BBC VISUAL EFFECTS DEPARTMENT...

When the BBC first moved into science fiction and fantasy in the mid '50s – notably for an adaptation of George Orwell's *1984* and Nigel Kneale's *Quatermass* serials – it demanded a new breed of craftsmen. Into this technical vacuum came Bernard Wilkie, an engineer, and Jack Kine, a scenic artist, who soon created a whole new design group within the Corporation – the BBC Visual Effects Department.

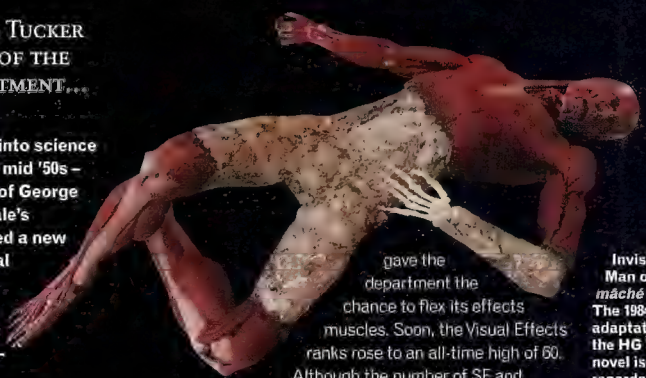
Initially, the members of this new department remained anonymous. However, the arrival in 1963 of a new children's drama, *Doctor Who,* gave the BBC's growing band of effects men something more meaty to chew on. In fact, as the programme became more popular, it played a major part in gaining the department on-screen recognition. The 1967 story, "Evil of the Daleks," for instance, was the first BBC programme ever to feature a credit for its fx designer, Michaeljohn Harris.

In the early '70s, productions like *Doomwatch* and *Moonbase 3* provided the Visual Effects Department with a showcase for its SF work, while classic comedies like *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and *Dad's Army* demonstrated that its workers could put their hands to pretty much anything.

The demise of Gerry Anderson's Century 21 Productions and Hammer Films lead to an influx of highly experienced talent into the BBC fold, introducing people like Tony Harding (who designed K9) and Peter Wragg (current head of the department). The increasing workload also meant an influx of new talent, including the near legendary Mat Irvine. Staff now totalled around 25.

Following *Star Wars* in 1977, the public's awareness of, and appetite for, effects increased enormously. This created an explosion of heavily effects orientated SF shows, things like *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, The Tripods, Box of Delights* and *The Chronicles of Narnia.*

At the same time, more traditional dramas with unusual themes, such as *Threads, Edge of Darkness* and *The Singing Detective,* also gave the department the chance to flex its effects muscles. Soon, the Visual Effects ranks rose to an all-time high of 60.



Invisible Man or *papier mâché* man? The 1984 BBC adaptation of the HG Wells novel is widely regarded as the definitive version. Many of the show's "invisible" effects were achieved mechanically rather than using Colour Separation Overlay (CSO) techniques.

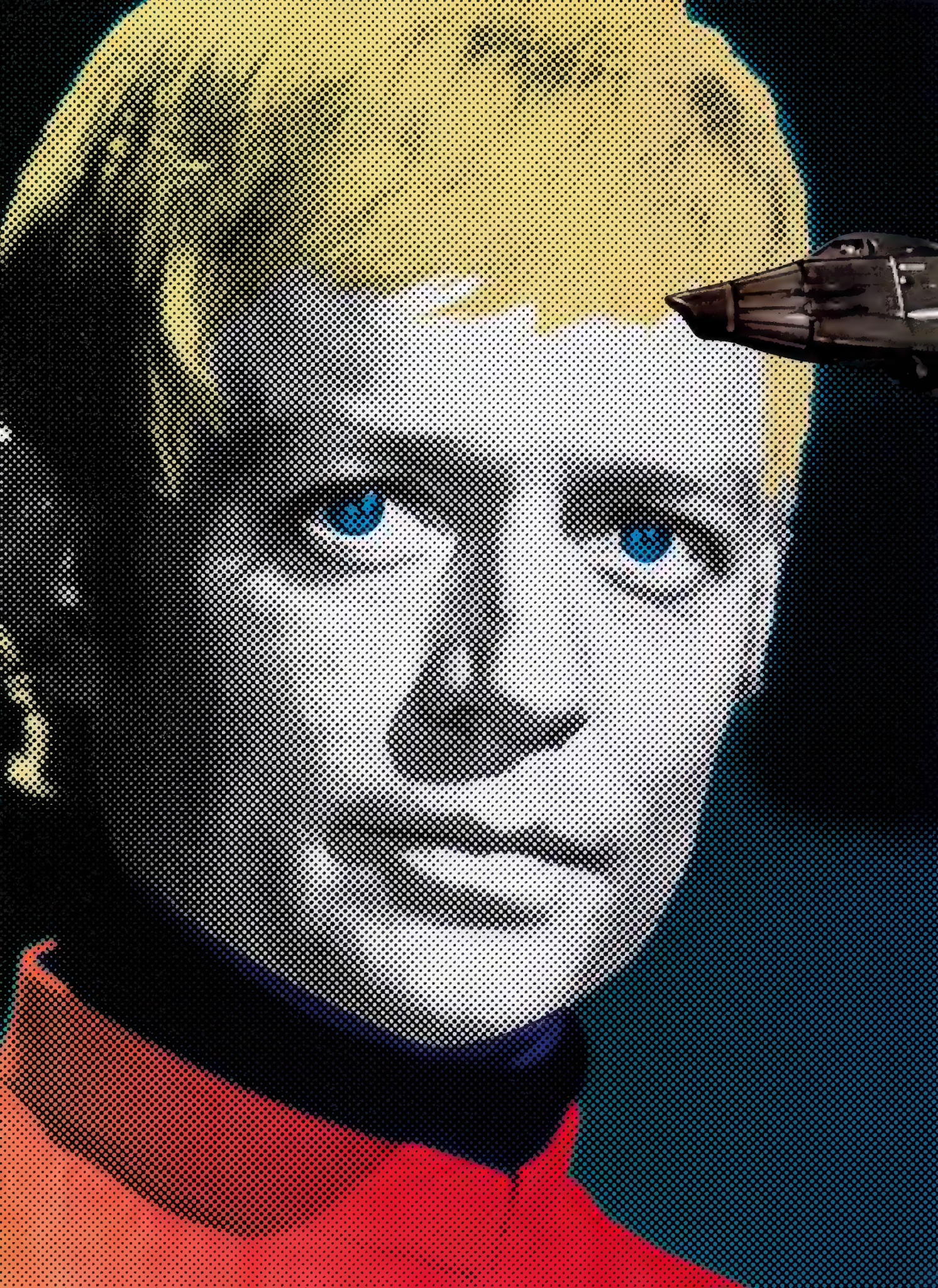
Although the number of SF and fantasy shows made by the BBC declined towards the end of the '80s, the quality of the effects rose to new levels. The final season of *Doctor Who, Star Cops* and *Red Dwarf* all featured high-tech motion control model shots, radio-controlled props and animatronic creatures.

In recent years, the BBC's policy of "producer choice" has lead to a number of significant changes. BBC producers can now choose independent companies to provide their special effects. The subsequent fall-off in work has therefore seen the department shrink rapidly. But, fortunately, the changes cut both ways – because now the department can offer its services to the independent sector.

Today's BBC Visual Effects Department is the largest, oldest and most experienced permanent TV effects facility anywhere in Europe, and its 29 staff are still determined to prove that they have the skill to produce movie quality effects at a fraction of the cost.

Some of the department's most recent work involved building this huge licence stamping machine for a Dutch public transport ad.

"Following the success of *Star Wars* in 1977, the public's awareness, and appetite for, special effects increased enormously."



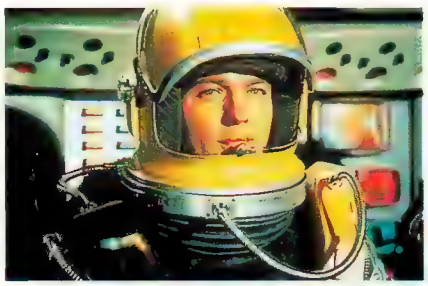
UFO

1970-73

Eventually it had to happen – '60s puppet master Gerry Anderson would make a bid for the really big time with his first ever live action TV show, UFO. Now, as a tribute to regular Anderson collaborator, special effects supremo Derek Meddings – who we sadly lost last month – **Jon Abbott** looks back at this breakthrough show, a programme that showcased some of his best work. (Just thank God Sylvia Anderson's fashions never caught on...)

It's 1980 – ten years into the future. Earth is suffering from a surfeit of radical '70s styles – Neru jackets, beige flares, bras worn under string vests – but we've got more serious things to worry about. Or at least our leaders have, as we poor proles are kept blissfully unaware of the trouble we're in. Our planet is under attack, you see, by liquid-breathing aliens from a dying race, who need us to provide a constant stream of organ transports for their failing bodies. To get the flesh they need, they make constant raids on us in their dinky little flying hubcaps, and little seems capable of stopping them. Fortunately for us, though, there's SHADO...

SHADO was, of course, one of those top secret paramilitary organisations familiar from many a Gerry/Sylvia Anderson extravaganza. From its secret bases, it works diligently to protect humankind, armed with amazing craft like the Skydiver plane, fired from a submarine, special tanks called SHADOmobiles, and a sophisticated satellite warning device named SID (Space Intruder Detector). SHADO's main HQ is cunningly concealed where no security breach by snoopy, unidentified strangers would ever be attempted – beneath an active film studio (actually MGM's Borehamwood film studios, where the series was made). An interesting place to locate a secret, high-tech base: It would have the advantage that anything untoward spotted by a member of the public could be explained away as a movie special effect, but the disadvantage that it would constantly be packed with inquisitive journalists...



UFO **wasn't all wigs, silvery fashions and Ed Straker looking glum. Sometimes people flew spaceships too...**

At least fewer people would be likely to spot SHADO's secret moonbase, home of the incredible better-make-this-one-missile-count Space Interceptors, where the job description seemed to include dressing like a *Playboy* bunny and wearing a bizarre purple wig for no apparent reason (if you're a girlie, that is).

Who's who?

It's a funny thing, but there seems to be something about SF that can turn the most competent and credible British performers into "let's-pretend" six year olds. Perhaps it's because most US TV is larger than life, so American actors are used to this sort of thing, whereas Brits, brought up in a drabber, more reality-based TV environment, are not. Perhaps it's because American television has its roots in Hollywood and the movies, while British TV comes from the radio and the stage. Or perhaps it's simply because so few actors of the time were willing to take SF seriously. Whatever the reason, only Ed Bishop, Brit-TV's rent-a-Yank from countless bit-parts, voiceovers and radio shows, carries his part off with any conviction. Everyone else looks, well, either like six year olds playing spacemen, or distinctly distressed...

Legend has it that when Bishop's hair dye job took too long to realise, he ended up making do with a rather obvious blonde wig. Still, even that wasn't enough to make him look half as uncomfortable as co-stars like ex-cop show toughie George Sewell, dashing macho-man Michael Billington, and dancer Peter Gordeno. The show actually had a massive cast of semi-regulars (other notables include Wanda Ventham, Vladek Sheybal and Gabrielle Drake), but usually focused on Bishop's grim Commander Straker, actually the only character to feature in every episode. No wonder the other main players remained underdeveloped, and were rarely seen doing anything other than their military-esque jobs. As a result, while the Anderson buff might be able to recite the entire life history of the third Skydiver pilot from the left, the casual viewer never really got to know the bulk of the cast at all...

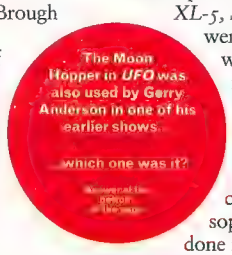
Where are they now?

Good question – most of the *UFO* crew remain better known for the other things they did in the '70s than anything they're doing now. George

Brit TV's favourite Yank, Ed Bishop, played Commander Ed Straker.

Sewell is best known for numerous police series, most notably *Special Branch;* Peter Gordeno was a dancer on Saturday night light entertainment shows; while Ayeshea Brough hosted a kids' pop programme!

Ed Bishop remains the busiest of the cast, regularly called upon when a British production needs an American voice. He was prominent in the nuclear holocaust comedy *Whoops Apocalypse,* and has most recently been seen doing everything from guesting in *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* to narrating Alexei Sayle's *Time Tunnel* spoof sketches "Drunks in Time." His film work includes *2001: A Space Odyssey, Mouse on the Moon, You Only Live Twice* and *Diamonds are Forever.*



After Bishop, perhaps the second most familiar face is Gabrielle Drake, now well known for her stage work, her stint on the soap *Crossroads,* her time on drama *The Brothers...* and her work as the TV wife of transatlantic comedian Kelly Monteith!

Underlying themes

Poor old Gerry. There he was, sitting in his brand new office at his brand new film studio, waiting for someone to ask him to make the next *Ben Hur,* and the phone just never rang. Just as his secretary had filed her nails down to the elbows, in walks pulp romantic novelist Roberta Leigh, looking for someone to turn her idea for a children's series into a TV puppet show. Anderson is so successful that ITV wants more. A lot, lot more...

Or so the story goes. Of course, the irony of it all is that Anderson never really wanted to do puppet shows at all. Even though his creations became cult icons, he always strove to get away from them... And in so doing, some would say, got further and further away from what had made his shows successful in the first place.

For sheer originality, Gerry and Sylvia Anderson's puppet – sorry, "Supermarionation" – shows can't be beat. Technically, they were brilliant. The opening sequences of series like *Fireball XL-5, Stingray, UFO,* even *Space: 1999* – were streets ahead of what anyone else was making in Britain at the time. The meticulous attention to detail, the elaborate invention, and the sheer love and devotion behind the sculpting and model-making is still a joy to behold. Almost absurdly, these children's shows were more sophisticated than most shows being done for adults at the time, and light years ahead of *anything* being filmed in Britain with real people, with the possible exceptions of *The Avengers* and *The Prisoner.*

That Anderson didn't understand what made his series successful – something he frequently admitted in interviews – was to become painfully self-evident, though, as he ditched the lovable puppet-like appearance of his fibreglass stars for more realistically-proportioned marionettes for some of his weakest shows, things like *Joe 90* and *The Secret Service.* It's hard to believe that the man who'd so effortlessly tapped into every kid's fantasy with creations like Supercar, Marineville and Tracy Island seriously thought we'd want to identify with the likes of the nerdy Joe 90, or the "Reverend" Stanley Unwin. With the puppet shows descending into boredom so rapidly, it was quite a relief when Anderson eventually realised his long-term dream, and created a live action show.

Conceptually, at least, it was a return to form. The Cold War shenanigans of *Joe 90* had been replaced by – yes! – an *alien* menace, we had some proper heroes, and fantastic machinery was back in style. Indeed, *UFO* and its follow-up, *Space: 1999* – originally slated to be the second series of *UFO,* but eventually developing into a bleak *Star Trek* lookalike – boasted the best special effects of all the Anderson shows, with Derek Meddings' moon-based Interceptors and eerie UFOs becoming classics of their type.

Lt. Nina Barry (Dolores Mantez) in her Moonbase operative regalia.

With such a strong premise to build upon, and such production values, it's sad that the rest of the show couldn't match them. Certainly by 1970, the Anderson style of scriptwriting had dated badly, with the clichés all the more self-evident for not being acted out by puppets. With mounting embarrassment, *UFO's* mainstream TV audience suddenly realised these storylines were meant to be taken *seriously*...

There were three big problems. First was that the show's set-up – essentially a live action reworking of his puppet series *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons* – was looking shopworn by the early '70s. We'd had XL-5, WAP, FAB, SPECTRUM, SIG, and now he was giving us UFO, SID and SHADO, more secret organisations and Superthunderstingcars – but we'd seen it all before. That said, this familiar set-up *could* have worked – if not for the second problem. Basically, the scripts and acting weren't up to prime-time adult TV standards, and we weren't given likable characters to identify with. Lastly, and this one isn't Anderson's fault, the more adult his storylines became, the more panicky the ITV companies became about this new "kids' show" they'd bought. (Remember, this was in a Britain that acquired *Star Trek* three years late.) Where and when should they show it? Nobody knew...

Together these three problems conspired to scupper *UFO,* its follow-up *Space: 1999,* and – or so it looks at the time of writing – the recent *Space Precinct* too. It's a tragedy, really, because the series' concepts, production values – and special effects by Derek Meddings and his successors – deserve much, much better... Answer: Captain Scarlet

Fact File

Regular cast

Commander Ed Straker: **Ed Bishop**
Col. Alec Freeman: **George Sewell**
Col. Paul Foster: **Michael Billington**
Col. Virginia Lake: **Wanda Ventham**
Lt. Gay Ellis: **Gabrielle Drake**
Lt. Nina Barry: **Dolores Mantez**
Lt. Joan Harrington: **Antonia Ellis**
General Henderson: **Grant Taylor**
Dr. Jackson: **Vladek Sheybal**
(Note: **Some of the regulars only appear in the first half of the series; others only in the second.**)

Recurring cast

Peter Gordeno, Ayeshea Brough, Georgina Moon, Gary Myers, Norma Ronald, Keith Alexander, Jeremy Wilkin, Jon Kelley, Harry Baird

Developed for television by **Gerry Anderson, Sylvia Anderson, Reg Hill, Derek Meddings**
Executive producer: **Gerry Anderson**
Producers: **Gerry Anderson, Reg Hill**
Music: **Barry Grey**

Total number of episodes aired: **26 one hour episodes**
First UK airdate: **16 September 1970 (ATV). Other ITV regions followed in their own sweet time.**
US première: **September 1972**

Some TV precedents: *Supercar, Fireball XL-5, Stingray, Thunderbirds, The Invaders, Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons, The Secret Service*

Some TV descendents: *Space: 1999, Battlestar Galactica, Babylon 5, The X-Files, Space: Above and Beyond*

Guest stars of interest: Lois Maxwell, Jean Marsh, George Cole, Stephanie Beacham, Steven Berkoff, Mike Pratt, Stuart Damon, Susan Jameson, Colin Gordon and Alexis Kanner of *The Prisoner, Thunderbirds* voices Shane Rimmer and Matt Zimmerman, and Paul Maxwell (Steve Zodiac himself).

A few things you probably didn't know about...

UFO

- Both Ed Bishop and George Sewell appeared in Anderson's unsuccessful live action feature film, *Doppelganger* (aka *Journey to the Far Side of the Sun).* Many of the props, cars and costumes built for the film were reused for *UFO...*
- Once, in a Broadway production, Ed Bishop – BritTV's favourite American – was forced to perform a role in a Brit accent!
- SHADO stands for – get this! – "Supreme Headquarters Alien Defence Organisation." So now you know...
- Legend has it that extras and guest stars on the show regularly teased the regular cast. How? By doing the obvious "puppet string" jokes, of course...
- Ed Bishop provided the voice for Captain Blue in *Captain Scarlet* before securing the role of Straker.

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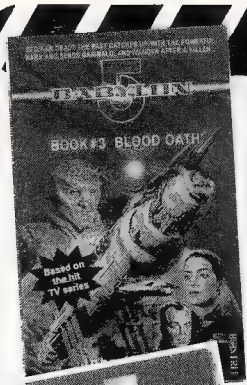

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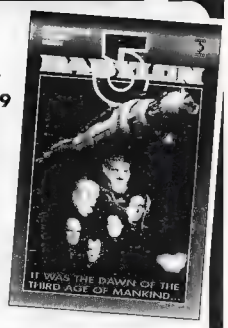

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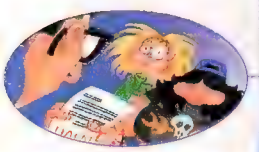

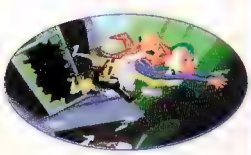

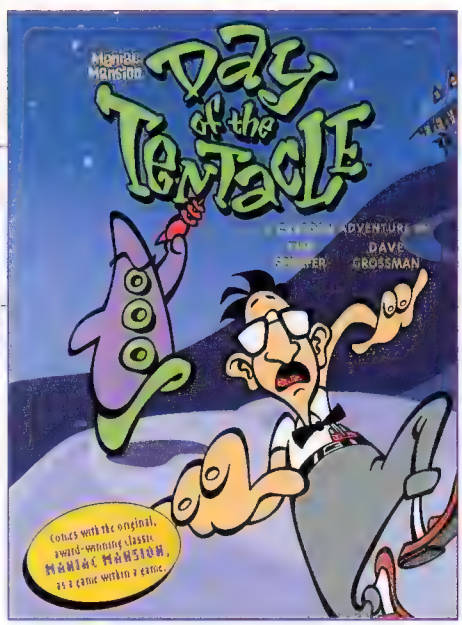
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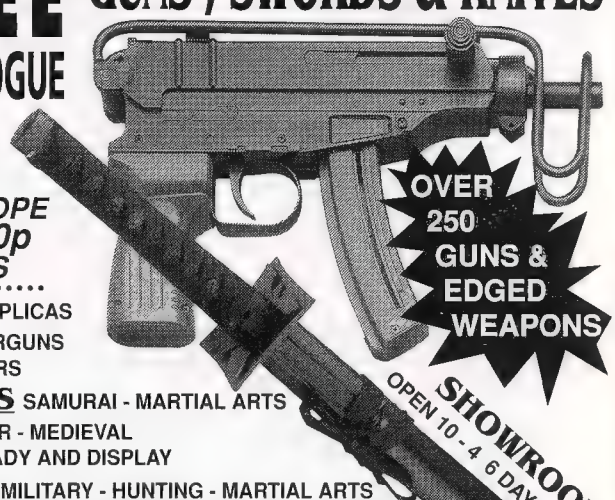

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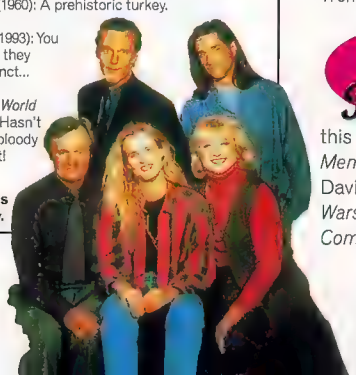
REVIEWS

Another packed reviews section, ranging from TV's VR.5 to Pratchett's Maskerade...

Revealed: The real reason dinosaurs died out...

With a Triceratops on the cover, this month's SFX review ratings guide just *had* to use dinosaur movies, didn't it? (The only problem with this listing is, when Spielberg eventually films his version of the *Jurassic Park* sequel, *The Lost World*, we might have to instigate an A++ rating to accommodate the thing. Damn his eyes...)

- **A** *Jurassic Park* (1993): Unbeatable!
- **A** *King Kong* (1933): A classic!
- **A** *One Million Years BC* (1966): Excellent!
- **B** *The Land That Time Forgot* (1974): Pretty good.
- **B** *The Lost World* (1925): Good for what it is.
- **B** *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth* (1969): Well, it's fun.
- **C** *One Million BC* (1940): A wee bit crap.
- **C** *Carnosaur* (1993): Not up to much, frankly.
- **C** *The Land Unknown* (1957): Definitely dodgy.
- **D** *Dinosaurus* (1960): A prehistoric turkey.
- **D** *Prehysteria* (1993): You can see why they became extinct...
- **D** *Creatures the World Forgot:* (1971) Hasn't even got any bloody dinosaurs in it!



Lori Singer heads up the *VR.5* family.

FILM Reviews **PAGE 68**
The long-awaited *Candyman 2: Farewell to the Flesh* at last makes its cinematic appearance, alongside a promising British horror movie, *Haunted*...

TV Reviews **PAGE 72**
The final, completely finished, as-seen-on-US-TV version of *Space: Above and Beyond* comes under scrutiny, plus Sky One imports *Nowhere Man* and *VR.5*...

VIDEO Reviews **PAGE 76**
A Ray Harryhausen triple-bill heads this month's mammoth (!) video review section, along with *Outbreak* to rent, *In the Mouth of Madness* to buy, and the latest *Supermans, Star Trek: Voyagers*, charts and more...

BOOK Reviews **PAGE 86**
Terry Pratchett's new, and brilliant, Discworld book, *Maskerade*, heads up this month's section, alongside Anne Rice's *Memnoch: The Devil*, and novels from the likes of David Gemmell and CJ Cherryh. A beautiful *Star Wars Archives* volume, and a glossy *Doctor Who Companions* book, hold up the media end...

COMIC Reviews **PAGE 92**
Frank Miller and Geof Darrow's beautifully pointless *The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot* leads this month's reviews section, alongside a couple of Vertigo mini-series, the long awaited fully-painted *Manbat*, and a hopeless DC/Marvel crossover effort...

NEW MEDIA Reviews **PAGE 94**
Grolier's *Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* – based on the heavyweight Clute/Nicholls *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* – is good, but *how* good?

MODEL Reviews **PAGE 96**
Did you ever want a real-life (or as near as dammit) *Star Trek* phaser when you were a kid? Of *course* you did. Us too...

TOSH Reviews **PAGE 98**
Nigel Planer's Pratchett audio tapes, *Star Trek* diaries and a little wind-up walking Godzilla feature strongly in our we-don't-know-where-else-to-put-them section...

FILM Reviews

"If you liked the first movie (a better than average horror flick) chances are you'll loathe *Candyman 2*, despite the fact that, once again, it's based on a story provided by Clive Barker."

CANDYMAN 2: FAREWELL TO THE FLESH

Is it the bee's knees, or should it be dealt a sharp right hook?

Candyman always seems to kill people from behind... (Er, but they *are* looking in mirrors, I suppose...)

Studio: **Propaganda Film Productions**
Director: **Bill Condon**
Starring: **Tony Todd, Kelly Rowan, Timothy Carhart, Veronica Cartwright**
Cert: **18**
Running time: **94 mins**
Release: **27 October**

Text: **Dave Golder**

Tony Todd seems be having vocal problems in *Candyman 2* – all his scary, booming resonance is missing.

HAUNTED

Sequels come in many forms: The continuing story *(The Empire Strikes Back)*; the rehash *(Nightmare on Elm Street* part whatever); the prequel *(Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom)*; and the ones that go off at a tangent, largely ignoring the style, themes and logic of the original. Cue *Candyman 2*.

If you haven't seen the original *Candyman*, this sequel will come across as just a competent, if unoriginal, shocker, with the prerequisite gore quota and a couple of memorable scenes to prop up the confused plot. But if you liked the first movie (a better than average horror flick) chances are you'll loathe *Candyman 2*, despite the fact that it's based (again) on a story provided by Clive Barker.

The action has inexplicably moved from the Cabrini Green housing project in Chicago to New Orleans French Quarter during the Mardi Gras. Todd returns as the Candyman, a 19th century artist who had his hand cut off, and was then smothered in honey and left to be stung to death by bees after he was caught doing more than just paint the portrait of a rich landowner's virginal daughter. Now, for some unconvincingly-explained reason, his hook-wielding spirit can be called up by saying "Candyman" five times while looking in a mirror – not a good idea, since he's likely to promptly rip you in half.

More inexplicableness: No explanation is given as to how the Candyman survived his incineration at the end of the first movie, nor – at least at first – why this time round he starts showing an interest in the wealthy Tarrant family. Of course, this soon becomes screamingly obvious, and long before the "twist" is finally revealed.

It's all formulaic stuff, to be honest, directed by Condon in a superficial, glossy fashion which owes more to the pop video approach of *Hellraiser 3* than the doom-laden bleakness of the original *Candyman*. It's slick and pacy, sure, but also essentially dumb and hollow. Todd as the Candyman is nowhere near as effectively used this time around, either – even his voice seems to have less reverb – and there's not much the remaining characters can do with their Acme© all-purpose-horror-flick-characters anyway.

Still, at least the special effects are up to scratch, with the notable exception of the rather ham-fisted ending, and the film boasts an indecent number of "false" shocks to keep you entertained.

At the end of the day, though, this sucks as a sequel, not so much building on the original premise as demolishing it completely and erecting something far less interesting in its place. Passable enough second-division horror fare.

Candyman, Candyman, Candyman, Candymaaarrggghhh!!!

"Okay, so you've seen *Carrie*. Whaddya want? Blood?"

Studio: **DoubleAA Pictures/ American Zoetrope**
Director: **Lewis Gilbert**
Starring: **Aidan Quinn, Kate Beckinsale, John Gielgud, Anthony Andrews, Anna Massey**
Cert: **15**
Running time: **110 mins**
Release: **27 October**

Text: **Jeremy Clarke**

An all too rare entry into a genre at which the British excel, *Haunted* is a rationally inexplicable ghost story. Based on a book by James Herbert, it plays a very clever game with the audience through central protagonist and parapsychology professor David Ash (Quinn), whose virulent personal crusade to expose bogus phenomena hides a repressed childhood incident – after failing to prevent his sister Juliet from drowning in a weir, he later hears her disembodied voice calling him.

Things come to a head when Ash is asked by the seemingly like-minded Robert Mariell (Andrews) to decisively disprove to terrified housekeeper Nanny Tees (Massey) that Mariell country seat Edbrook House isn't, in fact, haunted. Nanny is an emotional wreck, while the three Mariell siblings are odd, to say the least – artist Robert seems to have an unhealthy sexual fixation on free-spirited sister Christina (a beguiling Beckinsale), whose bare-breasted portrait hangs in the hallway, while younger brother Simon delights in practical jokes.

Quinn's casting is faultless. He lends Ash exactly the right professionally sceptical, yet personally troubled, tone. We're with him all the way as he exposes a fraudulent seance early on (whose guests include *Don't Look Now's* blind psychic, Hilary Mason) – but then the supposed fake medium's mouth starts uttering his name in Juliet's unmistakable voice.

Kate Beckinsale is impressed by the quality of Quinn's shave. (Actually, she just wants a snog.)

Beckinsale hangs bare-breasted in the hallway.

By the time he sees Christina dive nude into Edbrook's lake, the memory of his prepubescent sister's head smashing against a weirside rock is clearly preying on Ash's mind. As the story advances unstoppably towards its shocking and unexpected conclusion, he becomes less and less self-assured, as various forces, human and supernatural, threaten to push him not only into the lake, but also – quite literally – into the abyss of his darkest fears. It's scary stuff.

The film is fairly polished throughout too. Impressive fx set pieces punctuate the action – Juliet's corpse floats weightlessly underwater, a column of dust rises from the ground to twirl uncannily in mid air, and spectacular house fires suddenly engulf Edbrook's gas-lit corridors. Meanwhile, the atmosphere is consistently eerie.

Very much in the tradition of movies like *The Haunting* and *The Innocents*, *Haunting* is hardly groundbreaking stuff, but it *is* good at what it does. For director Gilbert, whose CV includes Bond pics *You Only Live Twice* and *Moonraker*, '50s war movies like *Sink the Bismarck* and the '80s social drama *Educating Rita*, this new move into spooky territory pays off in spades.

Anthony Andrews plays Mareill, out to prove there ain't no ghosts here.

© Rian Hughes

The month in FILM

FILMS THAT MAKE YOU GO "MMMM..." (AND QUITE A FEW THAT MAKE YOU GO "OH GOD..." TOO), PLUS NEW RELEASES FOR NOVEMBER, AND THE CHARTS.

Still playing

MORTAL KOMBAT

First Independent

Director: **Paul Anderson**
Starring: **Christopher Lambert, Robin Shou**
Cert: **15**
Running time: **100 mins**
Text: **Jonathan Norton**

Not so much a movie as a celluloid representation of the video game, *Mortal Kombat* largely dispenses with plot in favour of non-stop fighting action.

Directed by the man who brought us *Shopping*, the film that did for ram-raiding what *The Godfather* did for the Mafia, *Mortal Kombat* is, as you might have expected (or should that be "hoped"?), high-speed, moodily shot, completely hollow nonsense. But at least, unlike the movie version of *Street Fighter, Kombat* gives the game fans what they expect to see – characters who look and act (if that's not too strong a word) like the characters from the coin-op, and plenty of exciting one-on-one fighting.

And the scrapping's pretty impressive, too. In a stylised, you-can-tell-what's-CGI-with-your-eyes-shut kind of way. Definitely one that "you'll like if you like that sort of thing."

***Mortal Kombat's* Goro is *not* a nice man. And he's got four arms...**

The government agents (above) out to stop an experiment that's gone horribly wrong in *Species*.

SPECIES

MGM (UIP)

Director: **Roger Donaldson**
Starring: **Ben Kingsley, Michael Madsen, Alfred Molina, Forest Whitaker**
Cert: **18**
Running time: **108 mins**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

Springing from a very similar premise to the early '60s British SF TV show *A for Andromeda* – in which a message from space enables scientists to create a young alien woman who has a mysterious alien agenda – *Species* is a fast moving, sometimes bloody SF/horror romp which follows a mixed bag of US government types as they race to stop their genetically engineered alien from taking over the earth.

It's quite stylishly done, and sometimes fun to watch, but, unfortunately, not really very good. Model newcomer Natasha Henstridge does well as the half-innocent/half-vicious newcomer, but the other roles are desperately underwritten and – despite some top acting talent on hand – hammy.

Perhaps most disappointing of all is *Aliens*-creator HR Giger's female alien monster, the creature that Henstridge eventually morphs into. Like the rest of the film, we've seen it all before. Worse, it was done much better in *Alien* anyway...

THE NET

Columbia

Director: **Irwin Winkler**
Starring: **Sandra Bullock, Jeremy Northam**
Cert: **12**
Running time: **112 mins**
Text: **Jonathan Norton**

Hollywood has got itself wired. Well, it's seen a copy on the coffee table at that party round Mel's last week, at any rate, and now it thinks it knows everything about the geekdom that is the Internet.

And so the invasion of the cyberspace film has begun, the first on the scene being the decidedly humdrum Sandra *(Speed)* Bullock top-liner, *The Net*. Bullock gets caught up with political intrigue on the World Wide Web when a friend tips her off about a virus which provides access to top secret information (that's some virus).

As a technothriller, it displays little understanding of either technology or thrillers. The result is on an artistic par with an average episode of *Hart to Hart*.

Sandra looks shocked at the contents of alt.sex.hamster.ducttape...

Coming soon

Goldeneye **Nov 22**
A breed of duck which spends the winter on lakes in northern Britain, and distinguishable by its yellow pupils.

Dr Jekyll and Ms Hyde **Dec 8**
Sean Young is the dark side of a descendant of the famous Doctor in this updated comedy version of the classic novel.

The Indian in the Cupboard **Dec 22**
Frank Oz directs a whimsical fantasy about, strangely enough, an Indian in a cupboard.

Johnny Mnemonic **Jan '96**
Oh yes, another film shunted back in the schedules to the New Year, joining *The Lawnmower Man* and *Hideaway*. Early '96 looks like a busy time for genre film fans...

Lawnmower Man 2 **Jan '96**
More desperately exciting Internet shenanigans as the original on-line nightmare is reawakened. Cyberspace – a nice place to visit, but you wouldn't want to stay there.

SF Movie Box Office

Mortal Terror

The latest big-screen version of a computer game is proving to be by far the most successful genre film of the moment: ***Mortal Kombat*** took over $38 million in the September period. Meanwhile, ***Waterworld*** is still doing well, much to the chagrin of all its pre-release doom-sayers, while new entries include ***The Prophecy*** (a religion-themed horror flick starring Christopher Walken, filmed as *God's Army*), and Clive Barker's ***Lord of Illusions*** starring Scott *(Quantum Leap)* Bakula. Schumacher's ***Batman Forever*** is still doing well too.

The SFX Chart: Nov 22
Top Ten SF Films

1 **Mortal Kombat** (US) New Line
2 **Waterworld** (US) Universal
3 **Apollo 13** (US) Universal
4 **Casper** (US) Paramount
5 **Judge Dredd** (US) Buena Vista
6 **The Prophecy** (US) Miramax
7 **The Net** (US) Columbia
8 **Lord of Illusions** (US) MGM/UA
9 **Congo** (US) Universal
10 **Batman Forever** (US) Warner Brothers

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"A lot of *Space*'s pilot is taken up with introducing the cast and the situation, which causes things to drag a bit. But it's generally well-played by the young cast."

SPACE: ABOVE & BEYOND

SPECIAL AMERICAN PREVIEW!

From the producers of The X-Files comes the biggest new sci-fi series of the US season...

Production company: **Ten-Thirteen for Fox**
Producer: **Michael Lake**
Executive Producers: **Glen Morgan, James Wong**
Director: **David Nutter**
Starring: **Morgan Weisser, Kristen Cloke, Rodney Rowland**

Text: **Clive Parker**

***Space: Above and Beyond* is an unashamed cross between *Top Gun* (in space) and a gritty Vietnam war film – an unpromising recipe, but one that works remarkably well. Now that we've seen the broadcast version, with the effects 100% complete, it's clear that *Space* has the potential to grow into a distinctive, quality show. But it's not there. Not yet.**

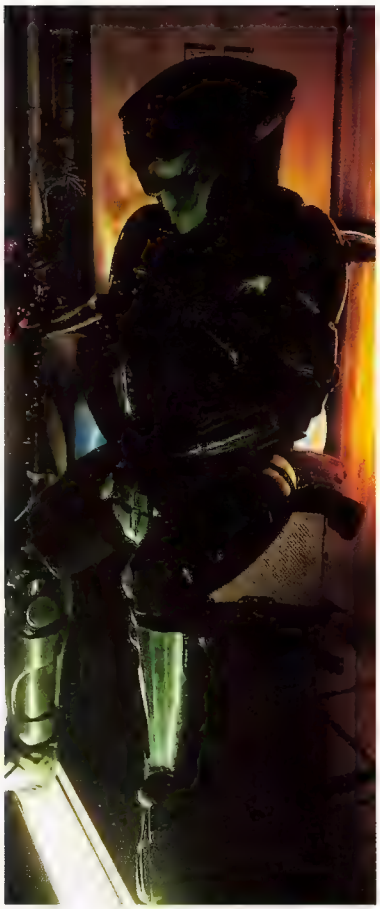
Set in the next century, at a time when humans (well, Americans) are colonising the stars, things come to a head when it becomes clear that someone – or something – is out there already. And they clearly don't want to share.

The two-hour pilot episode of *Space: Above and Beyond* introduces the set-up: It's 2063, and our hero, Nathan West (Morgan Weisser), and his girlfriend are about to board a colony ship on its way to a star system called Tellus. When, at the last moment, West is told to get off the ship to make room for "In Vitro" replacements – humans grown in tanks – he vows to catch up with Kyla, who has to stay on board. To that end he joins the US Marine Corps, space division, and here the show begins to get into its stride, becoming a space age mix of *An Officer and Gentleman* and *Full Metal Jacket*, dominated by *Jacket*-star R Lee Ermey as the archetypal drill sergeant WHO... TELLS... THE... RECRUITS... HOW... WORTHLESS... THEY... ARE, in his own subtle way.

In the Corps, West meets co-stars Shane Vansen, a girl whose parents were killed in the AI wars, and Cooper Hawkes, an In Vitro under court orders to join the Marines. But it's only when Kyla's ship is destroyed by aliens on arrival at Tellus – drawing Earth into war with a completely unknown adversary – that things really start to liven up.

Rodney Hawkes plays up the sullen, put-upon hero figure Cooper Hawkes, an artificially bred "In Vitro," who has problems relating to, well, *everyone*.

VR.5



You never get to see what the aliens actually look like *underneath* their armour – but their ships are swift and deadly, as our heroes discover to their cost.

Production Company: **Rysher/Samoset**
Starring: **Lori Singer, David McCallum, Anthony Head**
Showing: **Sky One, Saturdays, 8pm**

Text: **MJ Simpson**

The problem with virtual reality is that it's a *very* hot topic – but it's hard to know exactly what you do with it in visual terms. Current VR looks like blocky computer games, and "true" virtual reality would look like, well, reality. It's a problem...

VR.5 postulates that there might be a "level" of VR which you can access subconsciously, and which looks just like reality, but with odd colours. Lori Singer plays Sydney Bloom, a telephone engineer who accidentally finds a way into this "VR.5" world, and is then adopted as an agent by a mysterious group called The Committee.

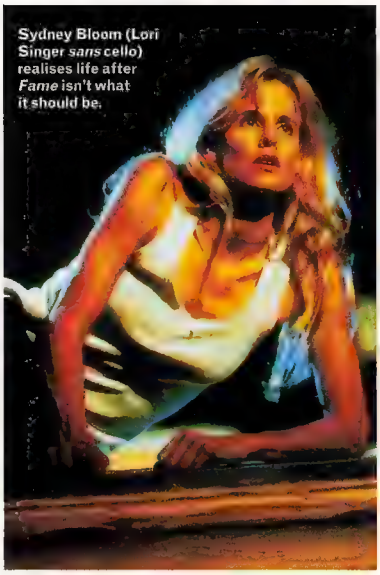
If you can accept this hokum – and that an intelligent, attractive young lady like Sydney can't get a boyfriend (and that she can afford all that cutting edge hardware on a telephone engineer's meagre wages) – then the series has some intriguing possibilities. The mysterious operations of The Committee gives the whole thing an *X-Files*-type aspect *(VR.5* was *The X-Files'* lead-in show last year), and there are some nice cameos. Watch out for Penn Jillette (of *Penn & Teller)* as Sydney's neighbour; it's a real shame they didn't make him a regular character.

VR.5 starts acceptably enough, but gets better as the series unfolds, especially after episode four, when the new Committee contact Oliver Sampson (Tony Head) is introduced. Annoyingly, the pilot – as is so often the case – rather sells the show short.

B

Erstwhile Gold Blend man Tony Head plays the sinister Mr Sampson.

***VR.5* – one big happy family...**



Sydney Bloom (Lori Singer *sans* cello) realises life after *Fame* isn't what it should be.

NOWHERE MAN

Production company: **Touchstone Television**
Created by: **Lawrence Hertzog**
Director: **Tobe Hooper**
Starring: **Bruce Greenwood**
Showing: **Sky One, Tuesdays, 8pm**

Text: **Allen Adams**

"Conspiracy grows... The chase quickens... Suspense builds... One man's desperation turns to madness... Deception... Betrayal... Is there a way out..? Never seen on network TV before... Directed by Tobe *(Poltergeist)* Hooper... Created by Lawrence Hertzog of *Stingray*..." *(A cop series, not the Anderson thing – Ed.)*

Well, that's how the hype went on US TV, and, for once, we in the UK are able to judge for ourselves rather quicker than usual, thanks to Sky snapping up *Nowhere Man* for UK transmission soon after its US debut. In *The Prisoner,* Number Six shouted, "I am not a number, I am a free man", but the problem for Thomas Veil, played by Bruce Greenwood, is that he's no longer *even* a number. In the course of one night, all trace of his existence has been deleted, and it's all got something to do with photographic negatives – taken in 1944, of an execution in a third world country – which Veil has in his studio...

To be honest, the result is more *Dead at 21* meets *The Fugitive* than *The Prisoner,* despite the obvious paranoia slant. When Veil tries to contact his wife, he's incarcerated in a mental hospital, where he meets Dr Bellamy (Michael Tucker from *LA Law).* There he foolishly gives away his mother's and best friend's addresses in an attempt to prove his identity, seeks the help of a schizophrenic (who gets lobotomised for his troubles), escapes with the doc, gets attacked by orderlies from the hospital – and then things *really* get bad...

Nowhere Man is certainly stylish – you can tell Tobe Hooper's at the helm – and the paranoia theme has a universal appeal, but the main problem with it all is that the bad guys are just *too* obvious. A little more subtlety and ambiguity wouldn't have gone amiss...

B-

Thomas Veil (Bruce Greenwood) doesn't have a wife, a name, or a life. In fact, he doesn't exist.

In hospital, Thomas Veil wonders what's going on...

As with most pilot episodes, a lot of *Space: Above and Beyond's* first outing is taken up with introducing the cast and situation, which causes things to drag in the first half. Hoary old cliché's raise their heads – the bar-room confrontation between our rookie heroes and some big-headed elite fighter wing; the "I've just found some 20th century music. I think they called it rock 'n' roll" scene – but generally it's well-played by the young cast, and remains watchable throughout.

One strange aspect of *Space* is just how much like the modern world this 2063 looks. Many scenes which don't feature spaceships could be right out of the likes of *Platoon*, on the principle that the world really hasn't changed *that* much since 1927, so why should it be that different 68 years into the future either? Well, perhaps. Sometimes this ploy works; other times it just looks like cheating. The astronauts on the Tellus colony ship seem to be wearing motorcycle crash helmets, for instance, but the spacesuits worn by the gung-ho Marines on the surface of Mars look like they could be real futuristic hardware, and are very effective.

Indeed, a good deal of the show is patchy like this – some of the first CGI spaceships are poorly rendered, for instance, while many of the later effects shots are extremely well-executed, particularly the action sequences. Let's hope things get more consistent in future episodes.

Now that the set-up is established and we're down to normal length shows, it seems fair to expect that the pace will be stepped up a bit, which would help things a lot. Indeed, *Space: Above and Beyond* has the potential to become a classic show. And watch out for the stunning Ramones-driven battles scene in an asteroid field off Jupiter – it's one of the best space battles I've ever seen. And I've seen a few, believe me.

B+

© Rian Hughes

The month in TV

A MIXED BAG THIS MONTH: A LOST IN SPACE FOR THE '90S, DEEP SPACE NINE GETTING ITS FIRST TERRESTRIAL AIRING IN THE UK, PLUS WHAT'S HITTING THE BOX IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, AND THE LATEST CHARTS.

EARTH 2

Production company: **MCA Universal**
Starring: **Debrah Farentino...**
Showing: **Sky One, Wednesdays, 8pm**
Text: **Joe Nazzaro**

If you took *Lost in Space* and updated it for the '90s, there's a good chance you'd come up with something like *Earth 2*. It's an uninspired rehash of the Irwin Allen '60s romp, produced by Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment (who also brought us – yes – *seaQuest DSV*, an uninspired rehash of Irwin Allen's *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*), complete with cheesy aliens, the obligatory cute robot, a pair of adorably annoying kids and even a Doctor Smith clone...

Devon Adair (Debrah Farrentino) demonstrates the latest design in foetal aliens...

Created by Billy Ray, Michael Duggan, Carol Flint and Mark Levin, *Earth 2* follows the adventures of a group of space travellers who crash-land on an alien planet where they originally planned to establish a colony. Led by actress Debrah *(NYPD Blue)* Farentino, the colonists trudge across their new-found home, with no apparent purpose other than look for lost supplies and estranged crewmen.

The biggest flaw of *Earth 2* is its unending blandness. The characters are dull and two-dimensional (I defy anyone to name all nine principals after the first half-dozen episodes),

Crashed ships, people arguing, constant tragedy – it's all here in the mundane *Earth 2*, which has already done badly in the States.

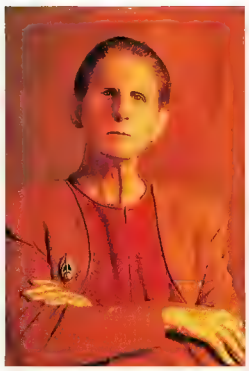
the exteriors shot on location in New Mexico unexciting, and the aliens, created by Oscar-winner Greg Cannom, disappointing.

There are some impressive space sequences in the pilot, but once our heroes are planetside, there's no more of that to look forward to either. Things get so bad, in fact, that when Tim Curry shows up in the second episode as a scheming castaway, it's like a breath of fresh air.

The problem is that, like its cast of characters, *Earth 2* lacks any direction. The colonists have no intention of leaving their new home, so there's no dramatic tension, and the lack of interesting aliens means our heroes are left to squabble among themselves rather than unite in a common cause.

If this review seems unduly judgmental of the first few episodes, it's actually written after the entire first season aired Stateside. When you watch the pilot, you might well think there's room for "improvement," but annoyingly no improvement ever occurs. Why some US fans are trying to resurrect this series is almost as big a mystery as why it was ever made in the first place...

C+



Odo (left) and Quark are the two most alien regular characters on *DS9*.

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

Production company: **Paramount**
Starring: **Avery Brooks...**
Showing: **BBC 2, Thursdays, 6pm**
Text: **Jonathan Norton**

This isn't a bad little show, really, despite not living up to its promise, and delivering a handful of extremely dull episodes ("The Storyteller" and "If Wishes Were Horses").

Basically, if you caught the pilot, that pretty much sums up what's in store for the first season or so – Bajoran political intrigue, lots of pretty wormhole effects, embarrassing father-son conversations between Sisko and Jake, intriguing stories that seem just a mite familiar and rarely seem to have satisfactory resolutions, and Major Kira shouting a lot...

But for all *DS9*'s faults there are some great things to look out for. The development of the Ferengi race is superb, culminating in the episode "The Nagus," where the head Ferengi comes to DS9 – an episode played almost exclusively for laughs. Also, the Odo/Quark relationship grows into a superb double-act, while the Cardassians turn from one-dimensional space Nazis into fine, wily villains.

Episodes to watch out for include the (atypically) action-packed "Captive Pursuit" and the emotionally powerful "Duet," in which a suspected Cardassian war criminal comes aboard the station.

Shame, then, that nominal lead Commander Sisko (Avery Brooks) has all the personality of a stick of celery. Still, this is a far above average slice of TV SF.

B

Coming soon

Wild Palms
Bravo **7 Nov '95**
The bizarre Oliver Stone-produced five-part mini-series, set in 2007, which tackled VR type-nonsense a good few years before the current cyberspace boom. More interesting than entertaining (a bit like most of Stone's stuff).

Fright Weekend
Channel 4 **17-19 Nov '95**
A weekend of cult horror movies, and a right mixed bunch they are too – *From Beyond the Grave, Blood Beast Terror, The Ghoul, Magic, Blood on Satan's Claw, Doctor Blood's Coffin* and the superb Euro-thriller *The Vanishing*.

Sliders
Sky **Jan '96**
Shunted back in the schedules by the likes of *Nowhere Man*, the pan-dimensional *Sliders* finally makes its debut on Sky early next year.

Space: Above & Beyond
Sky **Jan '96**
We've seen the pilot now and it looks... good. Amazing what some sfx and a bit of music will do, eh?

The X-Files: Season three
Sky **Feb/March '96**
The third series kicks off with the last two parts of the three-part story which began as the cliffhanger final episode of season two... Still there?

SF TV Top Ten

Every Night's a Winner

So, ***Space Precinct*** on Mondays, ***The Avengers*** on Tuesdays, ***TNG*** on Wednesdays, ***DS9*** on Thursdays, ***The New Avengers*** on Fridays... It seems like terrestrial TV has finally turned on to the fact that SF *can* draw in the audiences. The shape of this month's top ten (excised of satellite fare) is pretty predictable, with ***The X-Files*** hanging on to the top spot, and *DS9* leaping into second place.

The SFXclusive UK TV Terrestrial Top Ten Programmes

1. **The X-Files** (BBC 2)
2. **Star Trek: Deep Space Nine** (BBC 2)
3. **Star Trek: TNG** (BBC 2)
4. **Space Precinct** (BBC 2)
5. **The New Avengers** (BBC 2)
6. **The Munsters** (BBC 2)
7. **The Avengers** (Channel 4)
8. **Night Rider** (ITV)
9. **The New Adventures of Superman** (BBC 1)
10. **Power Rangers** (GMTV)

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MANGA

"*Clash of the Titans* is a typical example of the way Harryhausen films so often fail to be greater than the sum of their parts."

POETRY IN STOP-MOTION

Ray Harryhausen's best work is out again on video, courtesy of Warner Bros

One Million Years BC

Cert: **PG**
Director: **Don Chaffey**
Starring: **Raquel Welch, John Richardson**
Release: **30 October**
Running time: **96 mins**
Price: **£9.99**

A

The Valley of Gwangi

Cert: **12**
Director: **James O'Connolly**
Starring: **James Franciscus**
Release: **30 October**
Running time: **91 mins**
Price: **£9.99**

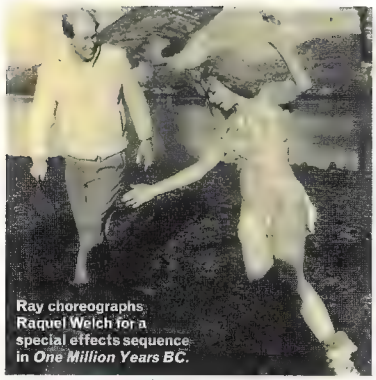
B

Clash of the Titans

Cert: **12**
Director: **Desmond Davies**
Starring: **Harry Hamlin, Laurence Olivier**
Release: **30 October**
Running time: **114 mins**
Price: **£9.99**
Text: **Dan Abnett**

C

Perseus (Harry Hamlin) fails to realise that Medusa can cause trouble even when she's dead. These two scorpions spring from her blood...



Ray choreographs Raquel Welch for a special effects sequence in *One Million Years BC.*

In these post-*Jurassic* days it might be tempting to celebrate these three flicks as classics of "their era," and let nostalgia indemnify their weaknesses. But that would be back-handed praise, and the films of stop-motion animator supreme Ray Harryhausen deserve better than that.

Clash of the Titans, the youngest of the three Harryhausen films released this month, should by rights be the best. It has a decent, visible-on-screen budget, the most prestigious cast, and the splendid wealth of Greek myths to draw upon. Given that these myths provided the inspiration for Harryhausen's greatest film, *Jason and the Argonauts,* it seems curious that he didn't exploit them more often. Perhaps *Clash* hints at why.

While Harry Hamlin, pre-*LA Law,* makes a reasonable stab at the role of Perseus, and the starry Olympian cast is great, the film is full of ill-judged contrivance and sudden titanic clashes of style. The atmospheric opening, in which warriors cast Perseus and his mom into a raging sea, sets up an air of moody, elemental myth that's instantly ruined by the irrepressibly cheerful main theme.

Both Pegasus and the Kraken are fine beasts, but spoiled by substandard matte work; poor

heroine Andromeda is a wet weed; and the twisted villain Calibos sadly comes across as quite sympathetic. The battle with the Gorgon is good, though. *Clash* is a fine example of the way Harryhausen films so often fail to be greater than the sum of their parts.

The Valley of Gwangi, made in 1969, is similarly flawed but remains wonderfully entertaining. A party of rodeo cowboys ventures into a lost valley and encounter several dinosaurs, including the Allosaurus Gwangi, which they lasso (in an astonishingly good effects sequence) and take back to civilisation. From there on, the film pays obvious homage to *King Kong,* with Gwangi breaking loose and finally meeting his demise amid the ruins of the human landscape.

One Million Years BC, a satisfying remake of a Hal Roach original, is bold and undemanding by comparison. Famously, there's no dialogue – the tale is carried by grunts, archetypal characters and primal cause and effect – and the end result is something almost allegorical. But no-one watches *One Million Years BC* for allegory. They watch it for the landscapes, the haunting soundtrack, the incandescent Welch, and, of course, the monsters.

This has the lot – a rampaging giant turtle and a duel between a T Rex and a Ceratopsian played out with classic, writhing, moaning, rasping Harryhausenesque melodrama. Brilliant.

OUTBREAK

Distributor: **Warner Bros**
Director: **Wolfgang Petersen**
Starring: **Dustin Hoffman, Rene Russo, Morgan Freeman**
Cert: **15**
Release: **27 Oct (rental)**
Running time: **136 mins**

Text: **Jonathan Davies**

***Outbreak* manages to make its audience feel quite queasy for the first hour and a quarter. It is to be commended for this. But then, entirely without warning, it becomes completely terrible.**

The opening scene, set in Zaïre and showing a mysterious new virus reducing a group of hardened mercenaries to frightened children, is horrible. Then there's a great bit where, as the opening credits roll, we're given a steadicam tour of a disease research lab back in America, gradually working our way from Biosafety Level 1, where trainee scientists throw test-tubes around with gay abandon, up to Biosafety Level 4, which involves protective rubber clothing and lots of flashing red lights.

Next, resist if you can the lure of the fast-forward button as we're shown some scenes establishing Dustin Hoffman's character – larking about boyishly with his dogs, paying a tense visit to his estranged wife (Rene Russo), bantering good-humouredly with both senior officers and subordinates, and bonding with his best buddy (who surely can't be long for this film).

But then, with an almost audible creak, *Outbreak* switches back to being a solid sci-fi thriller. "The chances of this virus showing up in the US are virtually nil," predict the military. But even as they speak, we are watching a monkey – identical to some we saw hopping about near the mercenary base earlier on – being smuggled off an African cargo ship, through customs, and into a small-town pet shop. We know the monkey's got the virus, so we wince when it spits in the smuggler's eye, cringe as it scratches the pet shop owner, chew our fingers as the smuggler kisses his girlfriend at the airport, and cry "No!" as a small child (probably called Jimmy) reaches for the smuggler's half-finished biscuit.

Considering that Motaba, the virus in question, is supposed to liquefy your internal organs and cause your eyes to haemorrhage, *Outbreak* seems refreshingly light on unpleasant special effects. Particularly icky bits are shown as reflections in

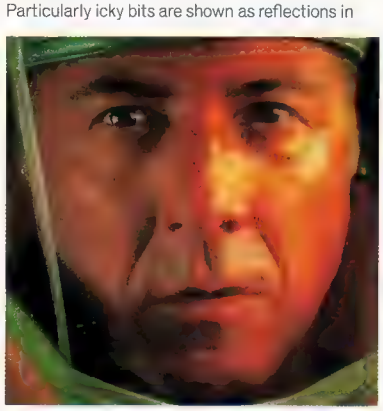
Estranged wife (Rene Russo) can't believe it when she discovers her husband's collection of kinky leisure wear (right)...

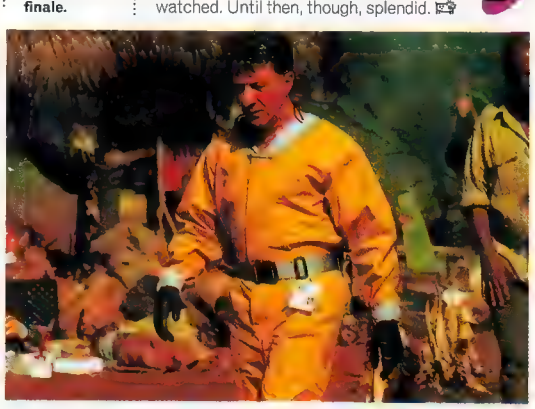
scientists' visors, and the victims we do see look as if they've got a slight rash. Instead, the horror of the disease is illustrated by the polythene isolation tents, the unwillingness of doctors to treat its victims, the ruthless enforcement of quarantine regulations by the military, and the line "Don't touch your mommy." It all works well, although the legendary cinema scene (where someone in the audience coughs and we follow an individual microscopic germ shooting out of his mouth and whirling through the air before alighting on its next victim) obviously loses its impact a bit on video.

And then, sadly, *Outbreak* can contain itself no longer, and launches into the absurd.

"You find him and you arrest him!" barks the evil General McClintock (Donald Sutherland) as Dustin Hoffman re-enters the action, turns loose cannon, steals a helicopter and sets off to single-handedly track down the disease-bearing monkey, discover a cure for the virus, evade the entire US Army, thwart McClintock's ruthless "final solution" and patch things up with Rene Russo, culminating in an absurd mid-air stand-off with a transport plane. A tear ran down my cheek as I watched. Until then, though, splendid.

Dull shots of men in yellow boiler suits fail to do justice to *Outbreak's* tense first half – or its ludicrous finale.





The sparky on-off romance between Superman (Dean Cain, above) and Lois (Teri Hatcher, below) is probably the main reason why *Lois and Clark* has been such a *huge* success.

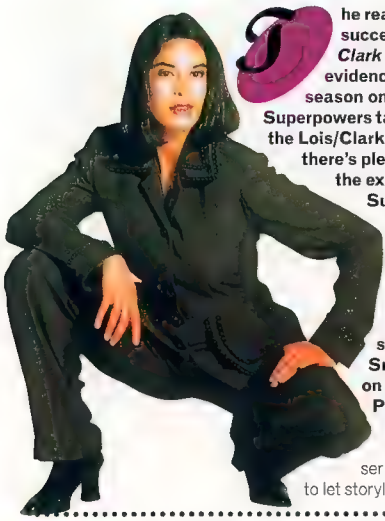
LOIS & CLARK

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN

Distributor: **Warner Bros**
Starring: **Dean Cain, Teri Hatcher**
Cert: **PG**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **88 mins each**
Price: **£10.99 each**
Text: **Nick Peers**

Volume four: **The Green, Green Glow of Home/The Man of Steel Bars** A-

Volume five: **Pheremone My Lovely/Honeymoon in Metropolis** B



The reasons for the success of *Lois and Clark* are much in evidence in these four season one episodes: Superpowers take a back seat to the Lois/Clark relationship; there's plenty of humour at the expense of the Superman myth; and a lot of time is taken with the development of the genuinely likeable supporting characters (the standout is Lane Smith's superb take on *Daily Planet* editor Perry White).

If there's a real weakness to the series, it's the tendency to let storylines drift in favour of character development and humour. Thankfully, both episodes in volume four avoid this pitfall to a large extent. "The Green, Green Glow of Home" introduces Kryptonite to Lois and Clark, and Dean Cain puts in a superb performance as Clark, both worried by the loss of his powers yet visibly relaxed to be back in his hometown, Smallville. It's an entertaining episode, with some hilarious moments, balanced by genuine tension, as the xenophobic government agent Trask (returning from "Strange Visitor") attempts to destroy the supposedly "unkillable" Superman.

In "The Man of Steel Bars," Superman is blamed for pretty much everything – and ends up doing porridge.

"The Man of Steel Bars" sees Lex Luthor attempt to win a lucrative power contract in Metropolis, while Superman is blamed for sudden temperature rises in the city. The episode has few surprises – we know pretty early on who's behind the heatwave – but the comic moments highlight yet again what's so good about the series. Particularly amusing are the scenes in which the judge places a restraining order on Superman, whereupon he's forced to have his prison mugshots taken! They're a hoot!

On the second tape, however, the plots go awanderin'. "Pheremone My Lovely" has everybody falling hopelessly in love, thanks to a plot by one of Lex's spurned lovers to spray the whole of Metropolis with an inhibitions-destroying perfume. While it's amusing, the story seems particularly lightweight, and the acting very hammy. "Honeymoon in Metropolis" completes the set, with a top-secret defence project under threat from an insane arms dealer. Ironically, Luthor is one of the goodies in this episode, but once again the plot is buried by excellent one-liners and character-based scenes. As a result, the honeymoon subplot is more interesting than the main story.

If you're after good, consistent – although often featherweight – stories with an emphasis on strong characterisation and romantic comedy, look no further than these episodes to see *Lois and Clark* at its best. If you're more into the action side of Superman, however, you're likely to feel a bit left out (but then again, when you consider how silly Dean Cain looks in his blue tights, perhaps we should be *thankful* that the fighting's been kept to an absolute minimum...).

Master of the weird, John Carpenter, at work on another of his seen-it-all-before-but it-has-its moments efforts.

IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS

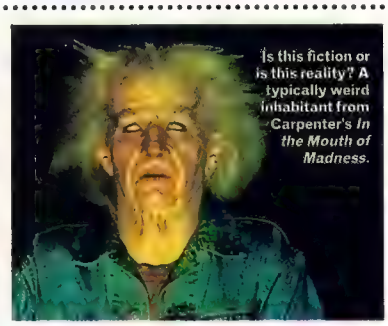
Distributor: **Entertainment In Video**
Director: **John Carpenter**
Starring: **Sam Neill**
Release: **7 November**
Running time: **95 mins**
Price: **£12.99**

Text: **Jonathan Norton**

After the classy intense horror of *Halloween* and *The Thing*, the lightweight romps of *They Live!* and *Starman*, and, most recently, the oddball *Memoirs of an Invisible Man*, Carpenter continues on his idiosyncratic way with *In the Mouth of Madness*.

At heart, this is little more than an extended episode of *The Twilight Zone*, a one-idea film that's stretched to its limits, and populated by characters with little more to do than get the plot going. Make-or-break for this flick is down to one thing – whether you like the core idea or not – which isn't the best position to be in when the central idea is so hard to explain (without giving away the twists at any rate)...

Sam Neill plays an insurance investigator called in when a famous horror writer goes missing. Neill thinks it's just a publicity stunt, especially when he traces the author to a fictional village from one of his own books. But then things get weirder. And bloodier. A big rethink would appear to be in order...



In the Mouth of Madness features some bizarre moments of black comedy, and the plot cracks along at a breathless pace. The trouble is that the actors, including the usually dependable Neill, are submerged by such a morass of hit-and-miss Lovecraftian plot elements they end up as little more than cyphers. A couple of dodgy rubber monsters let the side down rather too – although, in general, the effects are impressive.

A love-it-or-hate-it sort of film then – and not one of Carpenter's best efforts. B

Illustration: Rian Hughes

The month in VIDEO

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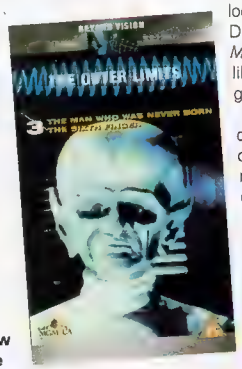
THE OUTER LIMITS

Distributor: **Beyond Vision (Warner Bros)**
Starring: **Various, including David McCallum, Martin Landau...**
Directors: **Various**
Cert: **PG**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **103 mins each**
Price: **£7.99 each**
Text: **Mark Morris**

Volume three: **The Sixth Finger/The Man Who Was Never Born** B+

Volume four: **A Feasibility Study/ Fun and Games** A-



The original episodes of *The Outer Limits* share a visual style which best-selling horror writer Stephen Laws describes as "Gothic Science Fiction." Certainly, three of the tales here are prime examples of how black and white TV *should* be made. Half-seen creatures lurk in patches of shadow, black sinister shapes loom among drifting fog, and slavering monsters lunge from darkness into extreme close-up. The incidental music is moody and ominous, and the monsters themselves stand up to scrutiny surprisingly well, even by today's standards.

Of the four stories on offer here, the first, "The Sixth Finger," is the weakest. It's actually something of an oddity, stark and shadowless, and set in an apocryphal perception of an English mining town, complete with locals who make Dick Van Dyke in *Mary Poppins* sound like, heaven forbid, a genuine Cockney.

David McCallum does his usual chip-on-the-shoulder routine, playing an outwardly cold miner who's barely repressing a seething cauldron of rage underneath. He becomes the subject of an experiment to create the man of the future by stimulating evolution to a fantastic speed. Despite McCallum's ever reliable input, however, this is a static, wordy episode, with little dramatic tension.

By contrast "The Man Who Was Never Born" is superb. Martin Landau plays a genetically mutated human from the future who travels back in time to kill the man who developed the microbe which has virtually wiped out humanity. *(Gosh,* 12 Monkeys *anyone? – Ed.)* A bitter-sweet love story, this has an erudite script and is beautifully acted. Landau imbues his character with anguish and apt pathos, and the supporting cast are good too, notably Shirley Knight as Noelle.

The stories on volume four are grimmer and more horrific. "A Feasibility Study," originally banned by the US networks, concerns an alien species which wishes to enslave humanity, and the episode contains some truly scary set-pieces. The shuffling appearance through the fog of the terrifying Luminoids is reminiscent of the Cenobites' appearance in *Hellraiser.* There's also the thing in the shed with its slurring voice, and the surreal, almost Lovecraftian realisation of planet Luminus.

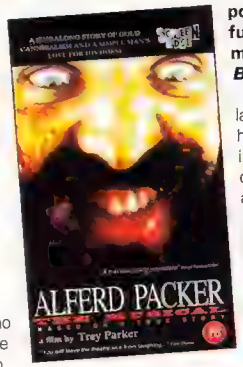
"Fun And Games," the final episode, is a forerunner to the *Star Trek* story, "Arena." Two humans and two savage aliens are forced by a higher power to fight to the death on a remote planet. This is involving, if unspectacular, fare, marred by the rushed, muted ending, which gives the story a top-heavy feel. However, it's worth seeing if only for the way the monster's eyes bulge and squirm in close-up.

All in all, these tapes are a must for telefantasy fans, and excellent value at only £7.99 each. Beyond Vision is to be applauded for finally making these excellent episodes more widely available.

ALFERD (SIC) PACKER: THE MUSICAL

Screen Edge

Cert: **18**
Director: **Trey Parker**
Starring: **Blood – and a horse!**
Running time: **80 mins**
Release: **Out now**
Price: **£12.99**
Text: **MJ Simpson**



Based on the true story of the only American ever convicted of cannibalism, this is quite possibly the funniest splatter movie since *Bad Taste.*

While Packer languishes in jail, his story is told in flashback, detailing how he and four other prospectors set off for the gold fields with inadequate equipment and supplies – and no sense of direction. Along the way, Packer's beloved horse is stolen by trappers and eventually his companions start dying. Well, what would *you* do?

The low budget occasionally shines through, but the songs are just terrific: Packer's cheerful "It's A Shpdoinkel Day"; the trapper's catchy paean to the delights of skinning small animals; and the final number – the whole town singing "Hang the Bastard" – which is easily the most tasteless song-and-dance routine since "Every Sperm Is Sacred." A must-see. B+

DR JEKYLL & SISTER HYDE

Terror Vision (Warner Video)
Collectors' cards

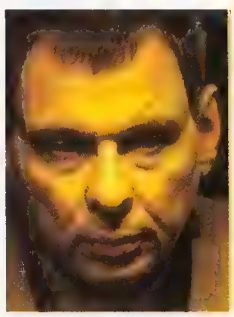
Cert: **18**
Director: **Roy Ward Baker**
Starring: **Ralph Bates, Martine Beswick**
Release date: **30 October**
Running time: **93 mins**
Price: **£10.99**
Text: **MJ Simpson & Suzi 9mm**

Mix together two of Robert Louis Stevenson's best

DARKMAN 2
THE RETURN OF DURANT

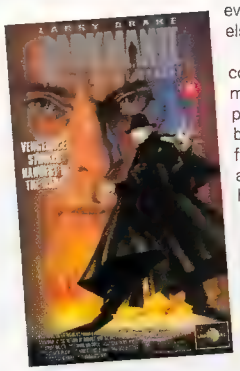
CIC

Cert: **18**
Director: **Bradford May**
Starring: **Arnold Vosloo, Larry Drake**
Release: **27 Oct** (rental)
Running time: **88 mins**
Text: **Dave Golder**



Sadly, there's no sign of Liam Neeson in this sequel.

Let's get this clear from the start. This is not "straight to video." It's *"direct to video."* Backers Universal would like us to note the difference – it doesn't want its first ever specially-made-for-the-video-market product to be confused with the likes of *Alien Toe Suckers from Planet Erotico.* Oh no.



But, to be honest, the only thing separating *Darkman 2* from low-budget video fodder is the budget. In all other ways, it's pretty much a cynical cash-in sequel to Sam Raimi's bizarre '91 thriller that displays nil imagination in the script department, and pretty much zero initiative everywhere else too.

Sure, it's competently made and passably acted, but the plot is a far less exciting and largely humourless re-run of the original, and Liam Neeson replacement Arnold Vosloo as Darkman has all the dramatic presence of a trainspotter.

Directed like a pop video, it's certainly pacy, and there are a couple of decent set pieces, but overall this is a big let-down. Let's hope the next sequel is more true to its roots... C

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SHOWMASTERS INTERNATIONAL

AVENGER PENGUINS

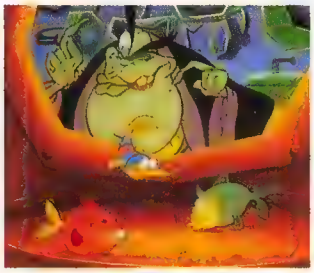
Arena Home Entertainment

Cert: **U**
Starring: **The voices of Mike McShane, Lorelei King**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **66 mins** (each)
Price: **£8.99**

Volume one: **The Wild West Story/The President is a Fish/The Labyrinth of Doom** B+

Volume two: **Hog Jamboree/Quantum Mechanic/Winter Tale** A-

Text: **MJ Simpson**



That mean ol' Caractacus P Doom doesn't stand a chance against these penguins!

Here we have six episodes from the first (1993) series of Cosgrove Hall's most science fictional series to date. If you've never seen *Avenger Penguins* (perhaps you were at work when it was on), here's your chance to sample one of the best British cartoon series of recent years.

The set-up is simple: Caractacus P Doom wants to rule the world, aided by his pathetic Peter Lorre-esque sidekick Harry Slime. Opposing him are three motorbike-riding penguins, Marlon, Bluey and Rocky. The action mainly takes place in and around Big City, but commonly veers off through time and space and takes in a variety of minor characters, most of whom are as interesting as the main players.

As one would expect from the people who gave us the excellent *Dangermouse* and much underrated *Duckula*, the scripts are witty, a touch self-referential and occasionally downright subversive. There are throwaway gags in the dialogue and the background images, and listen out for some sly references among the soundtrack music!

One thing these videos prove is that Britain is still the home of the best TV animation. *Avenger Penguins* is a million times better than most of the imported US rubbish that fills up the kids' TV schedules – the dire *Biker Mice from Mars* and so on. This stuff is both intelligent *and* entertaining.

Admittedly, the episodes on volume two are slightly better, with "Winter Tale" being the best of the lot, but be warned: "The President is a Fish" is actually the first episode in the series, so you should watch that one before any of the others or you could end up a little confused...

Martine Beswick eyes up her male alter ego, Ralph Bates.

THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS

Terror Vision (Warner Bros)
W'descreen

Cert: **18**
Director: **Roman Polanski**
Starring: **Alfie Bass, Sharon Tate, Jack MacGowran**
Release: **30 October**
Running time: **124 mins**
Price: **£12.99**
Text: **Andy Stout**

When the MGM lion at the start of the film suddenly grows fangs and mutates into a cartoon vision of a vampire, you'd be forgiven for thinking you might be in for a bit of a laugh. Nothing gutwrenchingly amusing, you understand, but a laugh nonetheless. Unfortunately, this 1967 Roman Polanski effort (aka *Dance of the Vampires*) – apparently intended as a spoof on vampire flicks – is bogged down by slow pacing and general heavy-handedness, and comes across as more leaden than light-hearted.

The Fearless Vampire Killers is very much a product of its era, stuck like a fly in amber at the tail-end of the '60s. There's a remarkable lack of dialogue, although the direction is nicely claustrophobic, and Polanski

...Or, *Pardon Me, But Your Teeth Are in My Neck* (the full title).

We mustn't let a little thing like this door come between us, dear.

manages to prove his allegiance to the sexual revolution by inserting a gratuitously heaving bosom five minutes into the film. There's the odd *Carry On*-style *double entendre* in here too, but still not enough to make things really fun. If ever a film was crying out for Sid James' august presence, this is it.

The story goes like this: Absent-minded professor and young, naive assistant go to Transylvania to search for proof of vampirism. While staying at a spooky inn, the owner is killed and the daughter and barmaid kidnapped by the vampires, leaving the professor and assistant to go after them. And that's about it. Most of the film is dull – and while Polanski drops Jewish and gay vampires into the mix, it hardly qualifies as proper satire. In fact, I'm not really sure *what* it is...

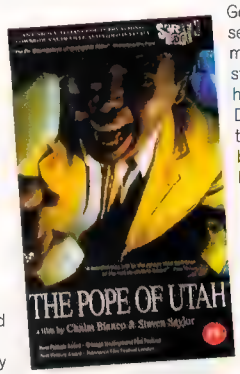
THE POPE OF UTAH

Screen Edge

Cert: **18**
Directors: **Chaim Bianco & Steve Saylor**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **82 mins**
Price: **£12.99**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

Set in the near future, this debut feature tells the story of high-tech televangelist Melvis Pressin and his disgruntled employee Del, a failed TV comedian who now edits swear-words out of films for broadcast on Melvis' channel, KTRI.

Del's wife is addicted to KTRI ("the home of the voice of God"), and is sending more money to the station than her husband earns. Del now wants to kill her off by blackmailing Melvis into giving her a heart attack by turning up on their doorstep in person!

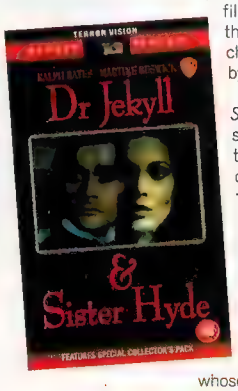


This futuristic black comedy won awards at "underground" film festivals in both London and Chicago, and, though the low budget shows at times, is far from being a trashy exploitation flick. It's a confidently directed, darkly comic picture of US religious TV pushed to the very edge...

horror stories – *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde* and *The Bodysnatcher* – together, stir in the real-life legend of Jack the Ripper, and finally add a bizarre sex-change story. The result could easily end up a godawful mess, but in 1971 Hammer turned this recipe into one of its best ever movies.

Bates, the star that the studio groomed to replace Cushing and Lee, plays Jekyll, and Beswick is the female *alter-ego* he accidentally unleashes while searching for an elixir of youth. They actually *do* look similar, which helps enormously, and the transformations are effected by clever editing and unusual camera angles.

To continue with his experiments, Dr J needs enzymes extracted from female organs, which he obtains from Burke and Hare. When they get lynched, he's forced to seek out his own victims, systematically murdering prostitutes around Whitechapel. Gradually, Hyde becomes the more powerful of the two personalities, and the film climaxes in a thrilling roof-top chase, pursued by Peelers.



Dr Jekyll & Sister Hyde is shot through with the black humour one would expect from a Brian Clemens script, mainly concerning Jekyll's "sister's" relationship with the young man upstairs, whose own sister is enamoured of Hyde! And full marks to Warners for an unedited print, replete with blood and bare breasts. Admit it, if you woke up and found you'd become Martine Beswick, you'd have a peek in the mirror too!

The month in VIDEO

This Shaw Brothers/Hammer co-prod was called *The 7 Brothers Meet Dracula* in the US.

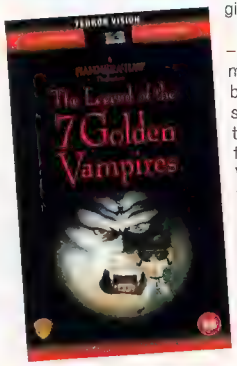
Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires

Terror Vision (Warner Bros)

Cert: **18**
Director: **Roy Ward Baker**
Starring: **Peter Cushing, Julie Ege**
Release: **30 October**
Running time: **89 mins**
Price: **£10.99**
Text: **Andy Stout**

You know where you are with bats on strings. This, though, could well have been one of the oddest films ever to emerge from the Hammer stable, a co-production between Hammer and a Hong Kong company made in the mid-'70s. The result is probably the ultimate B-movie genre – Gothic vampire camp meets martial arts.

Even Hammer, though, baulked at the thought of a plotline involving hordes of kung fu specialists chopping their way mercilessly through the Transylvanian countryside, so the story goes through some, erm, *interesting* contortions at the beginning. It starts off with a Chinese priest travelling to Dracula's castle to seek aid in waking his contingent of seven vampires. Drac, however, realising he could be onto a good thing, possesses the priest's body and journeys back to China to lord it over the other vamps and have a good nibble at the local community. Enter Cushing, reprising his role as Van Helsing, who's enlisted by the villagers living around the vampires' pagoda (we kid you not) to get rid of the hideous, fanged menace.



From here on things proceed apace, with lots of lovely, dumb martial arts setpieces, and Van Helsing discovering some interesting things about the Chinese vampires – things like the fact that crucifixes don't work, but (hurrah!) Buddhas do. The effects are gloriously bad throughout, the acting (apart from Cushing) wonderfully slipshod, and the plot has the sort of holes that a wide-bodied 747 could comfortably slip through relatively unnoticed. In other words, vintage Hammer.

B-

Street Fighter 2 – The Animated Movie

Manga UK

Cert: **15**
Director: **Gisaburo Suggii**
Starring: **Ken and Ryu, of course!**
Release: **Out now** (rental)
Running time: **98 mins**
Text: **Dave Golder**

Japanese version: "kyeeeee-DAAaaaah." "SHAAA-ky-YEN!" "KE-KE-KE-KE-doh!" Manga dubbed version: ""kyeeeee-Fuck-DAAaaaah." "SHAAA-ky-Fuck-YEN!" "KE-KE-KE-KE-Fuck-doh!"

Street Fighter 2 – The Animated Movie is little more than an excuse for a load of extended fights, which at least means that Manga UK's usual unsubtle dubbing is reduced to a minimum of dialogue and the odd, pointless expletives. But, let's face it, fighting action is what fans of the arcade game phenomenon want – and that's exactly what the live action movie failed to give them.

Here the characters – implausibly-muscled meat-heads like the bestial Blanka, the stretchy Dhalsim and the evil M Bison (yes, fans, they use the Western names for the fighters to avoid Mike Tyson lawsuits) – look and act much more like their game counterparts. They have the same special powers, they use the same special moves and they shout the same battlecries. All of which are fun to spot for the initiated.

For *Street Fighter* virgins, however, it's a plotless slog. The animation's better than average anime fodder, but hardly (here comes the cliché) *Akira* standard, and the music is Japanese *rawwwkkk* at its noisiest.

B-

A muscly bloke with an attractive necklace (above) meets Kylie Minogue (right).

Doctor Who: Paradise Towers

BBC Video

Cert: **PG**
Director: **Nicholas Mallett**
Starring: **Sylvester McCoy, Bonnie Langford, Richard Briers, Brenda Bruce, Elizabeth Spriggs**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **97 mins**
Price: **£12.99**
Text: **Paul Beardsley**

In the latter years of his reign as *Doctor Who* producer, John Nathan-Turner was making statements to the effect that fans were being tricked by their memories; supposed classics from the show's supposed heyday were really not as good as we fondly recall. At the time, there were hardly any past

SALEM'S LOT

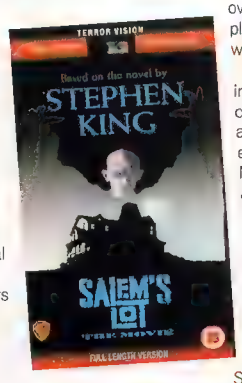
Terror Vision (Warner Bros)
Full-length version

Cert: **15**
Director: **Tobe Hooper**
Starring: **David Soul, James Mason**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **186 mins**
Price: **£10.99**
Text: **Andy Stout**

The rat-faced, clearly *Nosferatu*-inspired, head vampire chomps his way through town, and only Ben Mears (David Soul, right) has the garlic to stop him.

There isn't really much in *Salem's Lot* that differs from the standard take on vampires; it certainly isn't any great departure for King, and at times it's embarrassingly rooted in the late '70s. But despite the shortcomings, this is a good TV movie, and one that boasts some genuinely creepy moments.

The plot's classic King – a dysfunctional New England town devastated by a supernatural turn of events. Writer Ben Mears (David Soul), returns to his birthplace, haunted by the memories of a ghoulish house, and pretty soon he's confronting a plague of vampires who are intent on over-running the place, armed only with pointy teeth.



David Soul, in blue jeans, cowboy boots and quizzical expression, plays Mears, but it's James Mason who steals the show, blending restrained malevolence with total contempt for his colonial cousins. Support comes from the usual suspects of American B-movie-dom, but no-one disgraces themselves and director Tobe Hooper keeps things snapping along at a fair old pace.

The only real black mark against *Salem's Lot* is the ad enforced cliffhangers which pop up far too often. Ignore that, though, and you've got one of the few horror products of the '70s that hasn't dated too badly. And at three hours for 11 quid it's great value for money.

A-

A taste of Paradise (Towers): Sly McCoy lets the Kangs have the last Coke in the machine (top); and Richard Briers does a passable imitation of Chaplin in *The Great Dictator*.

ZIG & ZAG: MILLION QUID VID

Polygram

Cert: **U**
Starring: **Zig and, um, Zag**
Release: **13 November**
Running time: **80 mins**
Price: **£10.99**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

Those two wacky aliens who started off on Irish TV, then took over *The Big Breakfast*, have now released their first full-length video. It's 80 minutes of extraterrestrial glove puppets shouting at each other, and is thus highly unlikely to win the pair any new fans. In fact, the whole idea sounds awful.

And yet, against all odds, it's actually quite good. The premise is that Z and Z have been given a million pounds by Polygram to make a video, and have – very sensibly – squandered it all on loose cars and fast women. They are charged with fraudulent deception, and this vid follows the trial, as Zag persuades Zig to accept full responsibility and, thus absolved, defends his brother by claiming insanity. Fortunately, this delightfully stupid plot is frequently interrupted by largely unconnected sketches, including the Rodriguez Brothers and their schmaltzy medleys of pop hits; Trevor & His Magic Duvet; and the trailer for *Pulp Fishin'* (starring Uma Thermos)!

The whole thing appears to have been shot on a domestic camcorder, and all the "actors" look like passers-by who've just been roped in to help out. In other words, it's exactly like *The Big Breakfast*... There's also a guest appearance by "His Holiness Bob Holness," and even – gasp! – characterisation. If you like Zig and Zag, you'll love this. Just don't expect to understand it...

Zig (or is it Zag?) demonstrating how to blow a million quid...

***Whos* available on video, and we didn't have UK Gold re-runs, so we couldn't really argue with him. But we can now; we can see for ourselves that some of those classics really were classics, whereas "Paradise Towers" is as dreadful today as it was in 1987.**

The Doctor and assistant Mel (Bonnie Langford) materialise in a futuristic tower block in search of a swimming pool. The Tower Block, however, which is supposed to be an architectural wonder, is derelict, and populated by small pockets of tenants, eking out survival in various ways.

As usual, Doc and companion are soon split up. Mel makes her way to the swimming pool on the top floor, hoping the Doctor will do the same, and on the way has to avoid daft-looking robot "Cleaners" and cannibalistic old-ladies. Dangers abound – yet she quite happily slips into the pool for a swim, somehow failing to notice the bright yellow killer robot floating ten feet away...

Meanwhile, the Doctor encounters the Kangs, punkettes played by actresses a decade too old, and the ridiculous Chief Caretaker, played by Richard Briers, who seems to think he's in an episode of *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*, doing Hitler in the style of someone who can't act.

It's hard to believe that things will get any worse. "Paradise Towers" is infantile drivel, a cheap and nasty rip-off of JG Ballard's great novel *High Rise*. Even the *Children in Need* skit was better.

D-

STAR TREK: VOYAGER

Distributor: **CIC Video**
Directors: **Kim Friedman** ("Jetrel"); **David Livingstone** ("Learning Curves"); **Jonathan Frakes** ("Projections"); **Winrich Kolbe** ("Elogium")
Starring: **Kate Mulgrew, Ethan Phillips, Robert Beltran, Tim Russ, Robert Picardo**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **90 minutes**
Cert: **PG**
Price: **£12.99**
Text: **Clive Parker**

Volume 1.8: **Jetrel/ Learning Curves** B

Volume 1.9: **Projections/ Elogium** C+

The *Star Trek: Voyager* scenario continues apace, with the first of these two tapes boasting a couple of above-average episodes.

In "Jetrel," Ma'bor Jetrel is a member of the Haakonian race and inventor of the Metreon Cascade, a terrible weapon used to destroy the colony on the Talaxian moon – including Neelix's family. If all Talaxians are as irritating as Neelix, then this is probably a good thing, but this being *Star Trek*, morals and good intentions drive the plot. Jetrel claims to be on a mercy mission to save Neelix from the long-term effects of the Cascade, but Neelix views him with hate and suspicion. This is probably the best use of Neelix in a *Voyager* episode so far. I almost liked him.

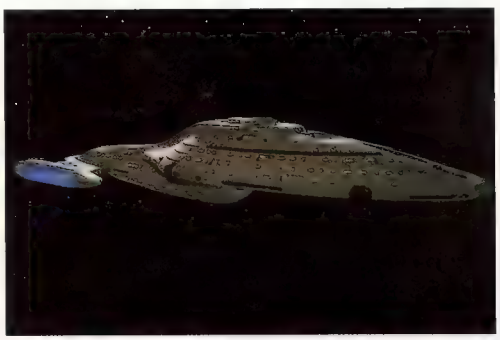
In "Learning Curve," Tuvok undertakes to train several of the more undisciplined Maquis in Starfleet rules and regulations. Typically, the Maquis crewmen react to this in a less than exemplary manner, leading to an outbreak of disciplinary fisticuffs on the part of a senior officer. (Surely a breach of protocol itself?) The training, alongside a lively subplot involving the ship's biometric systems, provides a solid and, yes, *entertaining* episode. Let's hope this is a sign of good things to come in future episodes.

The second of these two tapes shows the two ends of the *Voyager* quality spectrum – one of the episodes is very good; the other is absolutely awful. The first is "Projections," an excellent psychological drama reminiscent of the *TNG* episode "Frames of Mind." Indeed, the main protagonist of "Frames of Mind" was Jonathan Frakes, who directs this outing. The ship's holographic doctor is automatically activated because of a red alert, but, to his confusion, is then persuaded that he is, in fact, real and the *Voyager* is a simulation. So what is real and what is simulated? You'll have to watch to find out.

The second episode, "Elogium," demonstrates exactly what *Voyager* shouldn't be about. Bad writing and an absurd plot, supported by indifferent acting, has produced what's probably the worst episode of any version of *Star Trek* I've ever seen.

Giant space tadpoles (really) drag the Voyager along in their wake (in a vacuum) and generate a field which accelerates Kes into her breeding season, the Elogium. Kes' race, the Ocampa, can only breed once and have a single child, or never breed at all. All very well, but the first thing that came to my mind was this: If female Ocampa can only have a single child, won't the size of the population halve with each subsequent generation? The net result would be the extinction of the species in short order. At this point, I lost interest in the story, and so will you.

A mixed bag, then, but some good moments to enjoy...



Voyager looks closer to "a spaceship designed like a sleek running shoe" than *Hitchhiker's Guide*'s Heart of Gold ever did.

HIGHLANDER

Beyond Vision (Warner Bros)
Widescreen, original trailer + collectors' cards

Cert: **15**
Director: **Russell Mulcahy**
Starring: **Christopher Lambert, Sean Connery, Roxanne Hart, Clancy Brown**
Release date: **30 October**
Running time: **111 mins**
Price: **£12.99**
Text: **Andy Stout**

Now that *Highlander* has spawned an impressive array of spin-offs – ranging from a cartoon series and an imminent video game through to appalling sequels and a relatively watchable TV series – a Widescreen version gives us the chance to reappraise the original, and figure out exactly *why* it's achieved cult status.

Nine years after the event, you can find various Home Pages about the Immortals on the Internet, alongside numerous FAQs picking the thing apart frame

ALSO RELEASED

A ROUND-UP OF THE REST OF THIS MONTH'S VIDS – THE ALSO RANS, RE-RELEASES, AND THE ONES THE COMPANIES WON'T SEND US ANY PICTURES FOR...

Reviews by: Dave Golder **(DG)**, *MJ Simpson* **(MJS)** *Hillary Stephen* **(HS)**, *Jeremy Clarke* **(JC)** and *Clive Parker* **(CP)**

Devils of Darkness *(Dir: Lance Comfort, 1965, A Taste of Fear, £12.99). Wooden acting and dated clichés help turn this would-be scarefest into an unintentionally hilarious affair as friends of a novelist vanish one by one after he spends a few days in a Northern French village which, unbeknownst to him, is under the control of undead vampire Count Sinistre.* **(JC)** B

Strictly speaking, **Fade to Black** *(Dir: Vernon Zimmerman, 1980, MIA, £10.99) is more a slasher flick than a monster movie, but among the guises adopted by the film-obsessed psycho (David Alton would love this!) are Dracula and the Mummy, so we thought that was enough to warrant giving it a look. It's not bad either. (N.B. Mickey Rourke is top-billed on the sleeve, but he wasn't mentioned at all in the original publicity.)* **(MJS)** B

Hell Night *(Dir: Tom Desimore, 1981, MIA, £10.99) Blah, blah, blah – fraternity/sorority initiation rite – blah, blah, blah – spooky old mansion – blah, blah, blah – deranged psycho – blah, blah, blah – picked off one by one – blah, blah, blah – starring Linda* The Exorcist *Blair – blah, blah, blah... Not that it's predictable, you understand...* **(MJS)** B

Hercules Returns *(Dir: David Parker, 1963, Tartan, £15.99) is an Italian peplum (strongman movie) redubbed by Australians à la* What's Up Tiger Lily? *It's not very funny, but since the original was fairly tongue-in-cheek and the "new" storyline is not too dissimilar, it can be enjoyed in its own right as a rare example of this once-popular genre.* **(MJS)** B

Island of Terror *(Dir: Terence Fisher, 1966, A Taste of Fear, £12.99) combines elements of* Day of the Triffids *with George Pal's* War of the Worlds, *but ends up nowhere near as exciting as that heady mix sounds. Monsters created in a cancer research lab on a remote island reduce locals to jelly by sucking out their bone marrow. Scientists Peter Cushing and Edward Judd fly in to sort them out.* **(JC)** C

And so the marketing machine rumbles on and we get **Jurassic Park** *– Widescreen (Dir: Spielberg, 1993, CIC, £14.99). Sure, it looks majestic and lovely, but why weren't we given the choice of seeing it in Widescreen when it was first released on video? Let's hope there isn't scope for a director's cut.* **(DG)** B

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein *(Dir: Kenneth Branagh, 1994, Columbia, £12.99) is equal parts impressively grandiose and laughably ridiculous. It's hard to know whether Branagh himself had worked out what style to go for. De Niro is a crap monster, but the over-the-top direction keeps things watchable. (See rental review in issue one.)* **(DG)** B

The Matriarch *(Dir: Luca Bercovici, 1994, High Fliers, rental) is* The Nanny *meets* The Exorcist, *and was released in the USA as "The Granny." There's a certain mindless fascination in this tongue-through-cheek black comedy, which has Granny (Stella Stevens) returning from the morgue to kill her evil, grasping family. Dumb, but plenty of fun.* **(MJS)** C

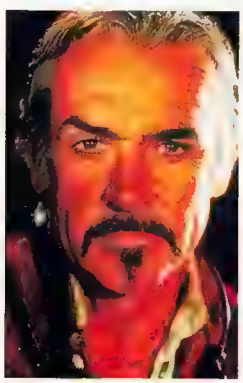
Parasite *(Dir: Band, 1982, MIA, £10.99) is set after some sort of nuclear disaster, and features a killer turd with teeth, plus Demi Moore in her first (very bad) starring role. She deserved better than this prime candidate for fast-forward oblivion.* **(HS)** D

James Cameron's directorial debut, **Piranha 2: Flying Killers** *(MIA, 1981, £10.99), shows a limited amount of early promise. Killer fish invade a nice friendly beach resort. Scenes of blood-soaked tourists running for their lives are okay, but take out the gore and you have* Carry On Club Med. *complete with naked girlies and nerds.* **(HS)** C

The debate rages on. Is **Stargate** *(Dir: Emmerich, 1994, Polygram, £14.99/£15.99 Widescreen) rubbish, or merely one of the worst films ever made? Some nice visuals do not make up for the kind of plot that would be substandard in* Lost In Space. *The characterisation is hackneyed, the effects ridiculously over-rated, and the clichéd storyline laborious and uninteresting. And for a supposed action movie, precious little happens for the first hour. Yet, quite strangely, some people like it. The Widescreen version is being released at the same time as the pan and scan version, so we'll let it off with a...* **(DG)** C

by frame. Let it be known you possess the Widescreen version and some people's eyes glaze over – they begin drooling uncontrollably and (worst of all) start reciting Queen lyrics. Trust me, I know.

So why this reverence? Absolutely no idea. *Highlander* remains today what it always was: A muddled cauldron of noisy battle scenes, quasi-mystical gibberish, indifferent special effects and men with long swords attempting to lop each other's heads off. Entertaining undoubtedly, but hardly the stuff that myths are built around.



Sean Connery plays the wise and feisty mentor in Mulcahy's visually impressive, but much over-rated, cinematic spectacle.

The chief thing in its favour is Russell Mulcahy's direction. Mulcahy had already foisted the atmospheric *Razorback* on an unsuspecting public a couple of years previously, and in both films leaned heavily on his music video background (his magnificent Duran Duran "Wild Boys" promo being probably the best thing on his CV). The film is therefore highly stylised and excellently lit, and though the intensity lags in places, other scenes have a marvellous fervour about them.

It also boasts a cabaret star turn from Sean Connery, who's his usual ebullient, larger-than-life self, and within two lines manages to out-act everyone else in the script. Okay, considering he's supposedly playing a Spaniard, he sounds remarkably Scottish (but then, doesn't he always?), but at least he makes a better impression than Christopher Lambert's almost Keanu Reevesian level of linguistic mangling. If this film had dialogue coaches, they should have been shot.

Highlander remains a pleasant romp, with some decent swordfights, occasional humorous bits and some enjoyable errors (like being able to see the wires holding things up during the finale). But at heart it's a B-movie with an A-movie budget, not particularly spectacular, and certainly nothing you'd think would have spawned a host of spin-offs in different media.

Still, given that Hollywood has just discovered where Scotland is on the map again – and with a vengeance if the success of *Braveheart* is anything to go by – it will probably prove to be a success all over again. B

The original and still the best? Well, possibly. Christopher Lambert dresses up in an old sheep and looks, well, vaguely Scottish.

Coming soon

Dalekmania – Limited Edition Box Set **23 Oct**
Each pack is individually numbered and contains a full colour booklet, two A2 posters from the *Doctor Who* films and six postcards for you to stick on your fridge.

Willow (Widescreen) **30 Oct**
George Lucas's fantasy that, like *Star Wars*, was rumoured to be the first part in a series, didn't quite manage to capture the public's imagination in the same way. Nevertheless, a fun romp with, possibly, the first use of computer morphing in a movie.

Street Fighter – The Movie **15 Nov** (rental)
Without doubt, one of the turkeys of the year. Game fans will loathe the liberties it takes with the plot and characters of the game. Everybody else will just loathe it.

The Langoliers **6 Dec** (rental)
The Stephen King TV movie adaptations roll on, but this could prove to be one of the better ones. A ratings success in the US, it's being put out in its three-hour entirety on *one* tape. Hurrah for Polygram, we say.

Tales from the Crypt: Demon Knight **8 Dec** (rental)
A horror anthology movie with only one story. Er, sort of. The Crypt Keeper makes his big-screen debut introducing an extremely bloody tale, with the lusty Billy Zane as a seductive devil.

Star Trek: Generations **27 Dec**
The *TNG* team finally make that move into the movies, then most of them fade into the background as Shatner hams it up like there's no tomorrow. Or today. Or, indeed, yesterday. Watch out for plot holes the size of Uganda.

Destiny Turns on the Radio **23 Jan** (rental)
Quentin Tarantino stars as destiny. Honest. (He didn't direct it, though, so don't get too excited.)

SF Video Charts

Manga Mania!

The world beating beat 'em up beats all opposition and goes straight to the top of the video chart – in its Manga animated format. It's doubtful whether the live action version will do the same next month. In fact, it's a good month for anime, with ***Angel Cop*** and ***Orguss 02*** also nabbing places in the top ten line-up. And, yes, on its nine-millionth re-release, ***Blade Runner*** makes yet another appearance. But the biggest surprise must be the *Doctor Who* vid ***Paradise Towers*** – you'd have to pay *us* to buy anything with Bonnie Langford in it.

HMV SF Top 10

1. **Street Fighter 2** (Manga)
2. **Star Trek: Voyager: 1.6** (CIC)
3. **Doctor Who: Survival** (BBC)
4. **Doctor Who: Paradise Towers** (BBC)
5. **Star Trek: Deep Space Nine Volume 3: 13** (CIC)
6. **Angel Cop 6** (Manga)
7. **The Crow** (Polygram)
8. **Orguss 02** (Manga)
9. **Blade Runner** (Warner)
10. **Babylon 5: Volume 7** (Warner)

'Grab a first edition now before they disappear, this man's going to be a major writer'

IAIN BANKS

KEN MACLEOD

THE STAR FRACTION

LEGEND

"It's a measure of Pratchett's skill as a writer that a book like this, which from any other author would elicit a review of justified hyperbole, can be dismissed as 'Well up to his usual standard.'"

MASKERADE

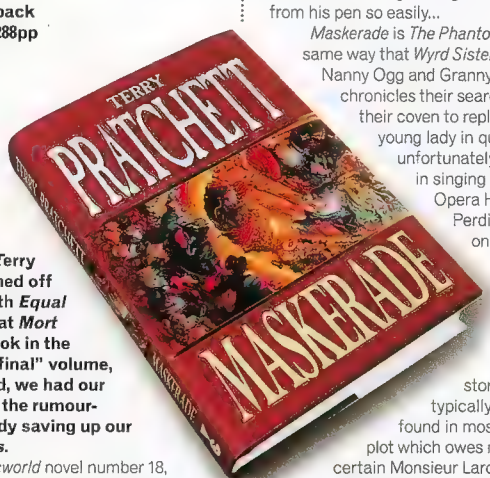
The latest Discworld novel is as grandiose and funny as its predecessors...

Author: **Terry Pratchett**
Publisher: **Gollancz hardback**
Price/page count: **£15.99, 288pp**
ISBN: **0-575-05808-0**

Text: **MJ Simpson**

Back in the late '80s, I recall hearing rumours that Terry Pratchett had finished off his *Discworld* trilogy with *Equal Rites*. Then we heard that *Mort* was the last and best book in the series. By the time the "final" volume, *Sourcery*, was published, we had our pinches of salt ready for the rumour-mongers and were already saving up our pennies for *Wyrd Sisters*.

Now here comes *Discworld* novel number 18, and the series still has no end in sight. Nor should it, because as long as there are plots to rework, themes to explore, and aspects of reality to satirise, Mr Pratchett will be there, laptop in hand, ready to create another bestseller. The frightening thing is it all seems to flow from his pen so easily...



Maskerade is *The Phantom of the Opera*, in the same way that *Wyrd Sisters* is like *Macbeth*. It stars Nanny Ogg and Granny Weatherwax, and chronicles their search for a third member of their coven to replace Magrat Garlick. The young lady in question is Agnes Nitt, but, unfortunately, she is more interested in singing at the Ankh-Morpork Opera House – under the name Perdita X Nitt – than gathering on a blasted heath.

However, Agnes is a plump, plain girl, and so cannot sing the main roles reserved for the glamorous diva.

Mixed in with this story of self-discovery – a typically subtle moral tale, as found in most Pratchetts – is another plot which owes more than a little to a certain Monsieur Laroux. There's a ghost haunting the opera house, and it's killing people – sometimes quite unpleasantly – but is the ghost really responsible for the deaths, or are other forces at work? As usual, knowing Pratchett's inspiration in detail will

help you appreciate the book more, but not knowing it won't spoil your enjoyment or limit your understanding. In fact, it may well encourage a few people to check out the original, which is no bad thing.

Appropriately enough, the structure of the book is somewhat theatrical, with the first third or so introducing all the characters (including Mr Salzella, the opera's musical director, and Enrico Basilica, a heavyweight opera star who doesn't want anyone to know that his real name is Henry Slugg), and setting up the various plots and subplots. The middle chunk of the book is slower-moving and more ponderous – "all plot" is the apposite phrase – as characters are developed and machinations are, um, machined. Then, in the final act, all Hell breaks loose as the two witches (well, one of them) work out what's going on. The action picks up, the pace becomes furious and there are thrilling rooftop chases and daring escapades aplenty. Pratchett is one of the few authors who could get away with describing a visual gag! Of course, a book about opera isn't over until... Well, I'm sure you can work out that gag yourself.

It's a measure of Terry Pratchett's skill as a writer that a book like *Maskerade,* which from any other author would elicit a review of justified hyperbole, can be dismissed as merely "well up to his usual standard." The man is quite clearly his own genre and even his lesser works (c.f. *Interesting Times* paperback review in this issue, page 89) is streets ahead of the competition. This will shift 40,000 copies in hardback, and ten times that in paperback, which is pretty daunting. What's more galling is that it's good and we lesser hacks can only justify our annoyance through sheer, impotent jealousy.

Of course, there are subplots to *Maskerade,* one of which involves the publication of Nanny Ogg's somewhat *risqué* (and hence bestselling) book of recipes, *The Joy of Snacks.* The royalties accrued from this enable the ladies to indulge in the good life, and hence visit the opera legitimately. Oh, and Death appears, as you would expect in a book where quite a few people pop their operatic clogs.

The book is dedicated "to the people who showed me that opera was stranger than I could imagine," so it's fairly obvious how it came about. What is remarkable is that while it lampoons opera for the ridiculous, elitist, over-priced, over-hyped and pretentious rubbish that it is, it also simultaneously celebrates opera for the glorious elitist, over-priced, over-hyped, pretentious *splendour* that it is! Maybe this will encourage people to go out and sample the opera for themselves, and that, again, is no bad thing.

Stick this book on your Christmas list. Or, if you can't wait that long, buy it for somebody else and read it before you wrap it up. ☞

A-

DOCTOR WHO: COMPANIONS

Authors: **David J Howe and Mark Stammers**
Publisher: **Virgin Publishing hardback**
Price/page count: **£15.99, 128pp**
ISBN: **1-85227-582-0**

Text: **Dave Golder**

Over *Doctor Who's* 28 year history, the multi-faced time traveller has been accompanied by 17 female, seven male and two robot companions. And this book covers the lot (except, perhaps, Bonnie Langford, who isn't so much celebrated as mentioned).

It's a superbly-researched tome, crammed with photos, many of which are rare, and some especially shot for the book. There's even a full-page, colour reproduction of the infamous pic of a nude Katy Manning (Jo) straddling a Dalek plunger, and a sneak preview of the Sophie Aldred in pervy rubber number, which will grace the back cover of next year's Ace book. It's all rather embarrassingly geared to get fan's juices flowing, basically.

The text is refreshingly irreverent, although still manages to pack in the facts. The majority of the book runs through each TV companion (plus the Brigadier and a couple of other UNIT regulars) in chronological order, followed by sections on film, book and comic book companions.

It's a shame that there's not a bit more colour, but the main problem for fans is that it's annoyingly too heavy to hold with one hand... ☞

B+

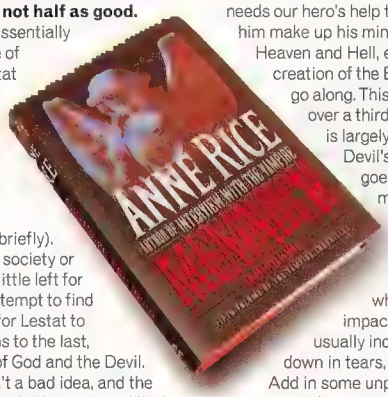
MEMNOCH: THE DEVIL

Author: **Anne Rice**
Publisher: **Chatto and Windus hardback**
Price/page count: **£15.99, 354pp**
ISBN: **0-7011-6320-8**

Text: **Andy Butcher**

The fifth (and final?) book in Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles, Memnoch: The Devil* is also the first new book in the series since the release of the movie adaptation of *Interview With the Vampire.* Once again, the narrator is Lestat, and the story features many characters who will be familiar to readers of the previous novels. Sadly, it's not half as good.

The problem lies in the essentially limited and predictable nature of vampires. To put it simply, Lestat has already done everything – he's "made" other vampires, been nearly killed, broken all the rules, come face to face with the first vampires, uncovered their origins, attempted suicide and even regained his humanity (albeit briefly). In the absence of any vampire society or competition, there's precious little left for Rice's vampires to do. In an attempt to find something new and different for Lestat to encounter, Rice therefore turns to the last, great "mystery" – the nature of God and the Devil.



On the face of it, this isn't a bad idea, and the book starts out well enough. Lestat is convinced that something is stalking him, and, after a well paced build-up, comes face to face with his pursuer, a being of immense power who claims to be the Devil. It's from this point that things start to pall. The Devil (or Memnoch) asks Lestat to become His assistant, saying that He needs our hero's help to "win the battle." In order to help him make up his mind, Memnoch takes Lestat to Heaven and Hell, explaining His version of the creation of the Earth and following events as they go along. This process manages to take up well over a third of the novel, during which Lestat is largely a passive observer. While the Devil's story is interesting, it simply goes on for far too long. Rice also manages to fall into the trap of having Lestat try to describe things that are "indescribable," and doesn't quite manage to pull it off. She also falls short when trying to convey the emotional impact of what occurs. Invariably, the usually indomitable Lestat ends up breaking down in tears, often for no good reason.

Add in some unpleasant urges from Lestat, and an unnecessarily cryptic ending, and you're left with a disappointing climax to what's otherwise been a consistently excellent series of books. ☞

C-

Brian Hughes

The month in BOOKS

PAPERBACKS, HARDBACKS, BACKPACKS... BOOKS OF ALL SHAPES AND SIZES READ, REVIEWED – AND POSSIBLY ENJOYED.

HAPPY POLICEMAN

Author: **Patricia Anthony**
Publisher: **New English Library paperback**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 282pp**
ISBN: **0-340-64004-9**
Text: **Sally Ann Melia**

A naked female corpse lies in the mud, rain-drenched and stone-cold. Her thighs spread wide are bruised. Her crotch, ripped and blood-splattered. Remember the US TV series *Twin Peaks?* Well, *Happy Policeman* is *Twin Peaks* with aliens. And for all its bright green "Magic Eye" cover and nursery rhyme title, makes for a bleak story too.

The opening murder initiates an investigation that will uncover drug-users, adulterers and prostitutes in every bedroom, kitchen and bathroom of the small, dreary provincial Texan town in which the novel is set. So far, so gloomy... What about the aliens?

Well, the twist here is that the town in which the events take place is contained within some kind of "shield," built by seemingly friendly extra-terrestrials to protect it from a nuclear war going on "beyond the line." Why? Er, don't ask me, I only read the thing...

At no point are we provided with any clue about the aliens' motivation. Similarly, alien characterisation and description are pretty thin. All the creatures look alike. Well, that simplifies things. They act as one and all have pink eyes. Oh good. We never catch a glimpse of alien spaceships, alien technology or even hear an alien sentence. They appear. They disappear. They are killing people again. *Why?*

The denouement comes slowly and involves parallel worlds. The town cop at the centre of the investigation will become a Happy Policeman if he can just find the right parallel world.

Neither a gripping thriller or a good piece of SF, *Happy Policeman* ends up as simply unconvincing, and not particularly enjoyable either.

D

AMNESIA MOON

Author: **Jonathan Lethem**
Publisher: **NEL paperback**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 249pp**
ISBN: **0-340-63224-0**
Text: **David Langford**

Jonathan Lethem attracted much attention with his first book, the twisted SF private-eye pastiche *Gun, With Occasional Music.* His second is even darker and stranger, set in a near-future America that has fractured into a variety of incompatible post-holocaust enclaves.

What was the disaster? In one town it was seemingly the Bomb and its spawn of mutants. Elsewhere it's a dread green mist by way of Stephen King out of Oz... Or invading aliens... Or a weird luck-based fascism where beautiful TV people rule a perpetually adoring population that's been made ugly... Or, well, several other things.

Our hero, who has a multiple-choice past as Chaos or Everett or Moon, hits the road and drives through these literal nightmares. Somehow dreaming has got out of hand, and potent dreamers can re-imagine reality. Stray into the wrong dream, and you might wake up as a midget, a 300lb lardbag, a clock, a bonsai tree – or not at all. One unsympathetic victim has been so mucked up that he now exists only as a drug effect: To chat with his image, you need a syringe so you can inject him into your veins. Very Philip K Dick.

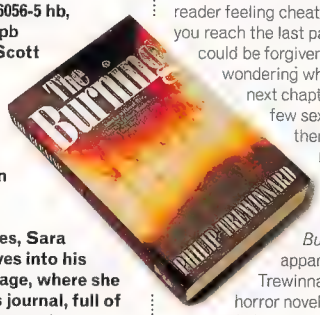
Amnesia Moon captures the essence of bad dreams, and is full of metamorphoses that can't quite be controlled. It ends on a note of hope as Chaos/Everett begins to focus his own dreaming and improve things in small, local ways, for friends. Extremely disorientating, blackly witty and memorable.

A-

THE BURNING

Author: **Philip Trewinnard**
Publisher: **Gollancz**
Price/page count: **£16.99 hb, £5.99 pb, 352pp**
ISBN: **0-575-06056-5 hb, 0-575-06057-3 pb**
Text: **Cavan Scott**

Soon after her alcoholic brother is found dead in extremely suspicious circumstances, Sara Carhays moves into his Cornish cottage, where she discovers his journal, full of cryptic references to a strange woman who tormented him during his last days.



The Burning follows Sara's descent into madness as an unearthly visitor begins to invade her dreams and control her life. Surrounded by sceptical friends, she becomes increasingly paranoid – alone and stalked by a decidedly vengeful spirit.

This is a hard book to like. Believe me, I tried. But from page one, it annoys and disappoints. The lengthy introduction to the countryside around the cursed cottage is, I suppose, designed to root the tale firmly in Cornwall – but instead it just comes across like the author wants to prove he's done his research.

The story also lacks original ideas. The events and characters are the same tired *clichés* to be found in countless mediocre horror novels, and while there are some promising mysteries woven around Sara's past, they remain forever unresolved, thus leaving the reader feeling cheated – when you reach the last page you could be forgiven for wondering where the next chapter is. The few sex scenes there are feel like just a cheap ploy too. *The Burning* is apparently Trewinnard's first horror novel. Ah well, the only way is up, I suppose.

D-

DARK TERRORS: THE GOLLANCZ BOOK OF HORROR

Editors: **Stephen Jones & David Sutton**
Publishers: **Gollancz** (hence the name...) **hardback**
Price/page count: **£15.99, 416pp**
ISBN: **0-5750-6136-7**

A

THE BEST NEW HORROR: VOLUME 6

Editor: **Stephen Jones**
Publishers: **Raven**
Price/page count: **£6.99, 448pp**
ISBN: **1-85487-421-7**

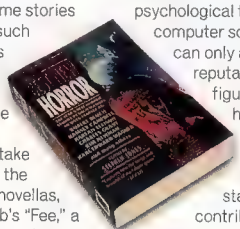
B+

Text: **MJ Simpson**

36 years ago saw the publication of *The Pan Book of Horror,* the first in a long-running series (28 volumes) of anthologies, which resurfaced in the '80s as *Dark Voices* (another six volumes). Now Pan has dropped the series, but Gollancz has nipped in and snatched up editors Jones and Sutton and their stable of new and established writers. On the strength of this first volume, Pan Books seem to be the losers. Quite frankly, there's not a duff story here.

The contributors range from rising stars like Mandy Slater and Charles A Gramlich to old hands like Ramsey Campbell and the late Karl Edward Wagner. Some stories are mere snippets, such as Charles Wagner's "All My Friends are Here," which shows that you can take the boy away from the town, but you can't take the town away from the boy. Others are full novellas, such as Peter Straub's "Fee," a tale of an abused young boy which finishes the collection.

Kim Newman's "Where the Bodies are Buried 3: Black and White and Red All Over" is a moral tale of "video nasties," a typical film buff's paean to freedom of expression, while SFX writer Mark Morris's "Eternity Ltd" is actually science fiction. Brian Lumley's "Uzzi" has a terrific monster, and of all these tales is most reminiscent of the old *Pan Books of Horror* from the '60s and '70s. However, the strongest story of all, correctly chosen by the editors to lead the anthology, is Michael Marshall Smith's "More Tomorrow." A terrifyingly compelling mixture of psychological terror and computer science, this tale can only add to his reputation as a major figure in SF and horror fiction.

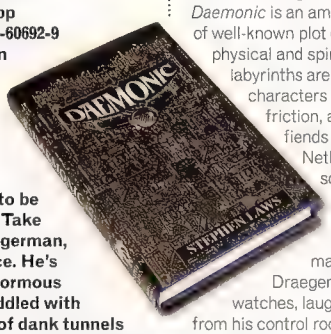


If Jones and Sutton can keep up this standard of contribution, then Gollancz has made a very sound investment indeed. Highly recommended.

Ironically, the latest volume of *The Best New Horror* is not quite as good. 22 stories are included,

Daemonic

Author: **Stephen Laws**
Publisher: **Hodder & Stoughton hardback**
Price/page count: **£14.99, 488pp**
ISBN: **0-450-60692-9**
Text: **Simon Forrester**



Why are rich people always supposed to be reclusive? Take Jack Draegerman, for instance. He's built an enormous fortress riddled with networks of dank tunnels and large, foreboding rooms, and feels free to call it home. He's just bound to be the bad guy...

Ex-horror flick director Jack has sent out a band of uniformed henchmen to invite a seemingly unconnected bunch of people to his new abode – and he's prepared to pay them for their trouble. Perhaps they'd be ready to pass up the chance of some quick cash if they knew Jack's views on how long human skin can retain its pliability and texture after it's been removed. You see, he's made a deal with A.N. Otherhugedemonicthing for immortality, most of his evil cash having been poured into a search for the afterlife.

You already know the guest list – the down-to-earth bloke who keeps everyone sane, a young, drug-led, useless Hollywood figure, an old actress straight out of *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*, a failed crook and an assertive female reporter, all of whom have One Thing in Common. *Daemonic* is an amalgamation of well-known plot devices – physical and spiritual labyrinths are explored, characters cause friction, and pit fiends of the Netherworld scream and chase, while the horribly manipulative Draegerman watches, laughing evilly from his control room. It's only a pity that Laws' sense of plotting doesn't match his flair for characterisation, presentation and fluidity, because each of these tired twists are executed flawlessly. Written horror is supposed to scare you with your own imagination, but even the most avid horror reader will tire after the thousandth ghost yells "boo!"

C+

Glittering Savages

Author: **Mark Burnell**
Publisher: **NEL paperback**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 325pp**
ISBN: **0-340-61783-7**
Text: **Mark Morris**

Mark Burnell's first novel, *Freak*, was a well-written, if occasionally humdrum, debut about faith-healing taken to extremes. His follow-up, *Glittering Savages*, is much better.

A killer who tears out his victims' hearts with his bare hands is stalking London. Robert Stark, meanwhile, is a caretaker in a London apartment block who becomes intrigued by a new tenant, the beautiful and enigmatic Rachel Cates. Rachel, however, is not all she seems...

Although the plot is not wildly innovative, the reader is swept along by Burnell's evocative and, at times, powerful prose style. His characters are convincing too, if a little cool and cynical. Very readable.

B+

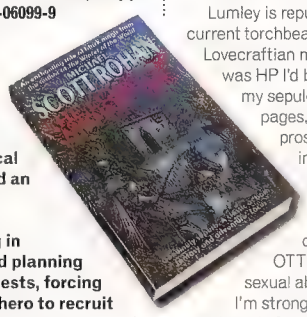
culled from anthologies such as *Little Deaths* and *Love in Vein*, and magazines such as *Analog* and *Interzone*. Authors include Gary Kilworth, Esther M Friesner, Paul J McAuley, Harlan Ellison, M John Harrison and Robert Bloch, along with the almost obligatory Kim Newman and Ramsey Campbell.

Some of the stories are indeed excellent, but the selection seems too subjective to be unequivocally "best," especially as some are from original anthologies which Stephen Jones himself edited in the first place. Surely a story should need more than one vote to qualify for a supposedly definitive collection such as this? Not that Michael Marshall Smith's "To Receive Is Better" (from *The Mammoth Book of Frankenstein*) isn't a great story, but it's the principle...

The other problem is that horror buffs are quite likely to have some of these stories on their bookshelves already. Nevertheless, the overall standard is high, making this a value-for-money anthology from some of the best writers in the field.

The Lord of Middle Air

Author: **Michael Scott Rohan**
Publisher: **VGSF paperback**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 253pp**
ISBN: **0-575-06099-9**
Text: **David Langford**



An unkillable Dark Lord with magical powers and an invincible fortress is luxuriating in villainy and planning new conquests, forcing our young hero to recruit dodgy supernatural aid and pay the price...

Rohan gives all this a grittily realistic setting on the 13th century Scots borders, full of period detail and featuring the real-life "Border Wizard" Michael Scot (one of the author's own ancestors). And here he really *is* a wizard, riding a demon horse and explaining his firebolts with double-talk about gunpowder in order to fool the Inquisition.

There's much battle, evil sendings, an extended trip to Faerie, a hopeless assault on the villain's real-world castle of Hermitage, the finding of a nasty loophole in the enemy sorcerer's invulnerability, and an in-joke or two for fans of Scott's poem *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

Without the ambitious scope of Rohan's "Winter of the World" and "Spiral" trilogies, this is an effective page-turner, with a good Scottish flavour.

B+

Necroscope: The Lost Years Vol 1

Author: **Brian Lumley**
Publisher: **Hodder & Stoughton hardback**
Price/page count: **£16.99, 483pp**
ISBN: **0-340-64961-5**
Text: **Dan Abnett**

Forget multi-volume epics; this goes one better. It's the first volume of a sequence designed to link two published epic cycles together. It's the fictional equivalent of a bridging loan... Or Polyfilla.

The epic cycles in question are Lumley's "cult" successes *Necroscope* and *Vampire World*. Now I'm not overly familiar with the aforementioned epic cycles. As a result, I could be blind to acres of subtext. In fact, I could be missing a whole lot. But somehow I don't think so...

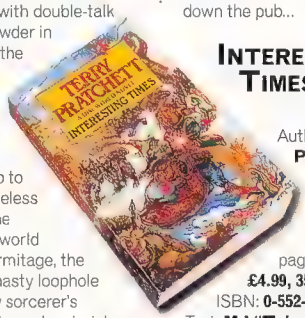
Lumley is reputedly the current torchbearer of the Lovecraftian mythos. Well, if I was HP I'd be spinning in my sepulchre. Every few pages, the wooden prose gets dragged into a side alley and horribly molested by some nasty descriptions of OTT violence or sexual abuse.

I'm strong of stomach and broad of mind, but this is all a bit *too* sordid for my liking – and it takes a rare talent to be both trite and offensive on the same page. The chummily heroic characterisation and xenophobic intrigue reads like seriously sub-standard "Duc de Richleau"-era Dennis Wheatley.

Lumley fans'll love it. I'll see the rest of you down the pub...

D

Interesting Times



Author: **Terry Pratchett**
Publisher: **Corgi paperback**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 352pp**
ISBN: **0-552-14235-2**
Text: **MJ "Tsimo" Simpson**

Reviewing the hardback of this 16th *Discworld* novel on *The Late Show* last year, critic Tom Paulin dismissed Terry as "a complete amateur [who] hasn't a clue." The alarming thing is that, if Paulin's only experience of Pratchett is the first few dozen pages of *Interesting Times*, his comments are justified.

The opening scenes, mostly set in Unseen University, with the staff attempting to magically locate and summon Rincewind, are awful. There's way too much dialogue, and the Bursar occasionally wibbling gibberish just isn't funny. But persevere and there is much to enjoy – particularly once the action moves to the Agatean Empire, the *Discworld* equivalent of China...

Some parts of *Interesting Times* are very good, but at 352 pages it's too long. Terry can do better than this, and does with *Maskerade* (see review, page 86).

B

The Star Wars Archives

Authors: **Mark Cotta Vaz** and **Shinji Hata**
Publisher: **Virgin hardback**
Price/page count: **£19.95, 208pp**
ISBN: **1-85227-587-1**

Text: **Matt Bielby**

There are so many good *Star Wars* behind-the-scenes books already available – the great "Art of Star Wars" series, for instance – that you'd be forgiven for wondering what the point of another one is. After all, a quick glance shows that this reprints many of the now-familiar lush production paintings, and adopts the same kind of glossy format. The difference, however, is in the photography.

The book is rather clumsily subtitled: *"Props, Costumes, Models, and Artwork from Star Wars. Includes the Indiana Jones Archives,"* which reveals its true intention – to show the props used in the *Star Wars* (and *Indiana Jones*) movies as they actually *are*, not as they appeared in the films.

And very impressive it is too. While the copy, though decent enough, is rather perfunctory, that's not what we're here for – the glory of this book is that someone has gone through the LucasFilm warehouse, and then taken quality snaps of all the interesting items tucked away there. Now you can see exactly what Darth Vader's helmet looks like close up, just how a light sabre was built (they look incredibly uncomfortable to hold, surprisingly enough), and just how unconvincing an Ewok suit looks without a little man inside it.

As you'd expect, the *Star Wars* stuff is more impressive and interesting than the *Indy* pages – there're only so many fake swords and religious idols you can take in before they all start to look the same – with the model spaceships the best bit of the lot.

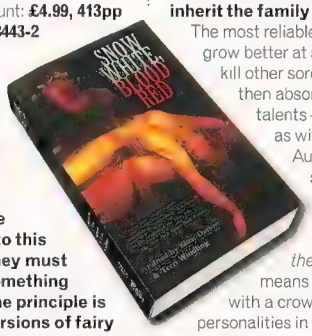
This is an excellent effort – although a quick read – and just the thing to brighten up your coffee table. It's got "Christmas Present" written all over it.

A-

The month in BOOKS

Snow White, Blood Red

Editors: **Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling**
Publisher: **Signet Creed paperback**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 413pp**
ISBN: **0-45-118443-2**
Text: **MJ Simpson**



As editors Windling and Datlow are currently compiling the third sequel to this anthology, they must have done something right here. The principle is that these versions of fairy tales liberate the concept from its current, saccharine, Disney-esque perception and return the stories to their gruesome, adult roots.

There are no surprises in the list of contributors: Charles de Lint, Steve Rasnic Tem, Esther M Friesner, Neil Gaiman, Jane Yolen, etc. What *is* surprising – and a little depressing – is that most of these writers have chosen to re-interpret the stories within the post-medieval setting in which they were first recorded, rather than recreate the stories in today's world. Only Gaiman's "Troll Bridge," loosely based on *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, stands out as a "fairy story" set among housing estates and railway lines, while Tanith Lee's re-working of *Snow White & The Seven Dwarves*, "Snow-Drop," is actually set slightly in the future.

My main complaint is that, although there is the odd flash of wit – Gahan Wilson's psychoanalytical vignette "The Frog Prince" is quite amusing – most of these stories are, frankly, a bit po-faced. The book as a whole is heavy on the sexual allegory, which gets quite tedious after a bit, and short on the gratuitous, sadistic violence. A lot of these stories don't entertain or – more to the point – scare, which was surely one of the main purposes of fairy tales.

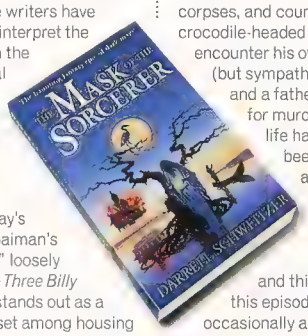
That said, if you like your stories deep, dark and full of symbolic eroticism, this could well be your cup of tea.

B+

The Mask of the Sorcerer

Author: **Darrell Schweitzer**
Publisher: **NEL paperback**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 421pp**
ISBN: **0-340-64003-0**
Text: **David Langford**

In this grim and painful world (with an old-Egyptian mortuary flavour), being an acclaimed sorcerer's son is no fun at all when you inherit the family business.



The most reliable way to grow better at sorcery is to kill other sorcerers and then absorb their talents – which, as with the Autarchic succession in Gene Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun*, means you end up with a crowd of dead personalities in your head who nag like perpetual back-seat drivers.

Schweitzer knows his fantasy, and (besides Wolfe) knowingly refers to Le Guin, Lovecraft and a host of myths. Early on, the all too young hero Sekenre makes a harrowing night journey into the land of the dead, along a metaphysical river full of mud, stench, corpses, and countless crocodile-headed nasties, to encounter his own rotting (but sympathetic) mother, and a father whose plans for murderous eternal life have hardly been affected by a nasty death and the hacking-out of his eyes.

The second and third sections of this episodic novel are occasionally anticlimactic after the bloodstained horror of the first. Sekenre tangles with more vicious sorcerers, perfects his craft in the College of Shadows (where both the entrance exam and graduation ceremony are kill-or-be-killed trials), and finds himself still walking the tortuous maze of his father's scheme to achieve godhood by murdering an actual god.

Strong stuff, but despite Schweitzer's occasional attempts at quieter interludes, the overpowering weight of doom and darkness makes for a decidedly exhausting read.

B

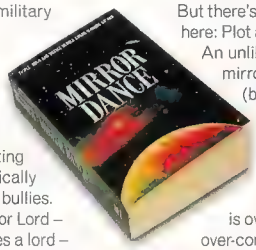
Mirror Dance

Author: **Lois McMaster Bujold**
Publisher: **Pan paperback**
Price/page count: **£6.99, 610pp**
ISBN: **0-330-33433-0**

Text: **David Langford**

Lois McMaster Bujold must be doing something right. *Mirror Dance* won the Hugo for Best Novel this year, as did its predecessors *The Vor Game* and *Barrayar* in 1991 and 1992.

Bujold's vein of SF might be called cuddly militarism, but with touches of humour, tasteful sex, and a powerful feel-good factor. The main series hero, Miles Vorkosigan, is deformed, undersized and brittle-boned (I've lost track of how often he resignedly feels another bone snap), but, despite this, he's a charismatic military genius and fabulous in bed. His physical weaknesses make him more interesting than SF's typically overmuscled bullies. Also, he's a Vor Lord – everyone loves a lord – with a supportive military family, and leads a double-life as leader of a crack mercenary outfit which harries the nasty Cetagandan Empire and vile oppressors everywhere.



Mirror Dance features many characters from past episodes (which it helps to have read) – notably Miles's cloned twin Mark, who here impersonates his bro, hijacks a mercenary spaceship, and sets off to free a lot of clones scheduled to have their brains scooped out and replaced by the brains of their ageing originals. The resulting disaster leads to a rescue attempt from Miles, who ends up dead for a large chunk of the book and then, in an amazing SF innovation, revived as an amnesiac...

The military action isn't altogether convincing. Given the series background, the bad guys would surely have effective ground-to-air defences against these commando raids from space. Bujold doesn't dwell on the fighting, though, but on its aftermath – the pain of healing, the greater pain of realistic torture (from which recovery seems a little too swift), and the grim dance of negotiated ransoms and reparation. Appropriately enough, the thoroughly hissable villain – whose motives, alas, are buried in an earlier episode – finally does get his come-uppance.

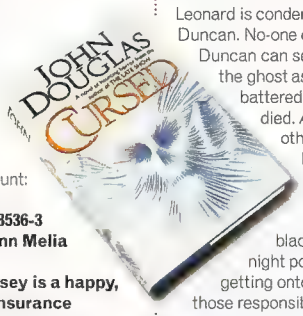
But there's another story here: Plot and counterplot. An unlikely profusion of mirrors in the text (beginning with the title) reflects, as it were, the strange duality of the brothers. Miles is overpowering, over-confident, and sometimes insufferable. His dark twin Mark – raised and trained as their father's intended assassin – needs to find his proper distance from Miles as neither an imitation nor a vengeful opposite. Ultimately, the relationship reaches convincing stability: Fans of the series will cheer when Mark is finally able to take the piss out of his over-achieving brother.

Not a deep book, but good fun.

B+

Cursed

Author: **John Douglas**
Publisher: **Hodder & Stoughton hardback**
Price/page count: **£16.99, 224pp**
ISBN: **0-340-63536-3**
Text: **Sally Ann Melia**



Leonard Halsey is a happy, successful insurance salesman with only one weakness – an insatiable craving for sex. Not kinky, violent, under-age or unconsenting sex, you understand – just sex, plain and simple. Then Leonard suddenly dies.

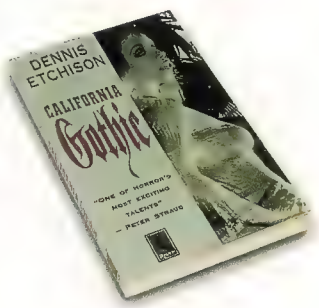
Duncan, the happy, no-hope night porter finds Leonard strangled, sprawled across the floor of his cheap hotel room – and because he was murdered, Leonard is condemned to haunt Duncan. No-one other than Duncan can see Leonard, the ghost as naked and battered as the day he died. And no-one other than Duncan can hear his spirit, as he prompts and blackmails the night porter into getting onto the trail of those responsible.

In *Cursed*, as in all good thrillers, there are bodies and gruesome causes of death at every turn. And at the centre of it all is Duncan, who, as police close in and family grow ever more suspicious, must search for that "rational" explanation...

Leonard was involved with Devil worshippers. So poor Duncan, still in hot pursuit of the man's killers, soon finds himself alone, after midnight, on a windswept moor watching... Well, anyway, there's this really sick bit with a dog. It's probably best if you read it for yourselves – when it comes to crude violence, John Douglas doesn't pull any punches. And it's perhaps because the book's so graphic and deliciously realistic that the whole thing is so damned readable.

Cursed is the tale of an Adrian Mole lost and adrift in Dante's *Inferno*, and it's good. One moment I'd be laughing aloud at Duncan's inane insecurities, the next I'd be gripping the arms of my seat, my stomach churning at detailed descriptions of vicious death and sexual torture. Read it!

B+



California Gothic

Author: **Dennis Etchison**
Publisher: **Dell paperback**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 326pp**
ISBN: **0-440-21726-1**
Text: **Cavan Scott**

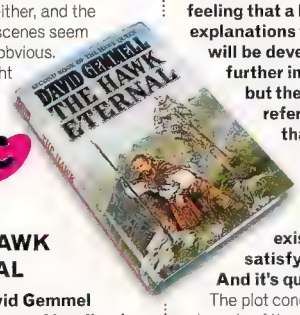
Words like "horror unlike anything you've ever read before" automatically make me suspicious. All too often books that claim new angles and concepts fail to deliver anything like the promised delights, and *California Gothic* is no exception. Not that this is a bad book – the writing is readable enough – it's just the unoriginal plot that lets things down.

Dan and his wife Evie are preparing to move house when Dan's past catches up with him. He'd almost forgotten the time when he was a poet, in love with a member of a radical terrorist cult wiped out by the FBI – but when his deceased lover knocks on the front door, it all comes flooding back. And as Dan and Evie descend into paranoia, their son – a horror-flick fanatic – soon finds the lines between celluloid and reality blurring...

California Gothic is thankfully free of ghosts and ghoulies –

unusual for a tale about the dead rising from the grave. The only zombies to be found are in the movies Dan's son is so obsessed with, while the shocks are disappointingly mild. Etchison's twists aren't really that twisty either, and the concluding scenes seem rushed and obvious. A decent light read for a long train journey, but no more.

C



The Hawk Eternal

Author: **David Gemmel**
Publisher: **Legend hardback**
Price/page: **£15.99, 313pp**
ISBN: **0-09-935511-6**
Text: **Dave Golder**

Blimey, here's a rarity. A segment of a multi-part extravaganza which stands alone in its own right. Oh sure, there are lots of cross references to Gemmel's first Hawk Queen novel, *Ironhand's Daughter* – and you definitely get the feeling that a lot of the explanations washed over will be developed in further instalments – but the self-referential stuff thankfully never gets in the way of the action. The *Hawk Eternal* exists as a satisfying whole. And it's quite short too.

The plot concerns the struggle of the mountain clans against the evil Aenir, a race of warriors who are ruthlessly conquering the entire continent. It concentrates on roguish Caswallon of the Farlain clan, a popular man and natural leader who, despite this, prefers to spend his time raiding and stealing than join the council. But when he realises that the Aenir are about to attack, and that the council won't do anything about it, he realises he may have been squandering his talents...

But this stuff is only one strand of the story. There's also the druid Taliesen to think about – a member of an ancient race who travel through time and space using "the Gateways." Or, at least, they did before the Great Gates closed down, leaving Taliesen and others of his race trapped in one small area of space and time. When random elements begin crossing through the Minor Gates and causing myriads of alternate realities, Taleisen has to try to trace and intermingle the time lines to create one with a particular outcome...

A bloody, action-packed romp, with some intriguing twists, *The Hawk Eternal* is fantasy for people who don't usually like fantasy. There are no elves, dwarves and dragons, though there are plenty of battles, prophecies, Holy Grail substitutes and (usually embarrassing) light-versus-dark rhetoric. Still, if you can live with the archetypal, almost mythical characters and the rites of passage clichés, *The Hawk Eternal* is gripping stuff.

B

A Dance in Blood Velvet

Author: **Freda Warrington**
Publisher: **Pan Books paperback**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 584pp**
ISBN: **0-330-32662-7**

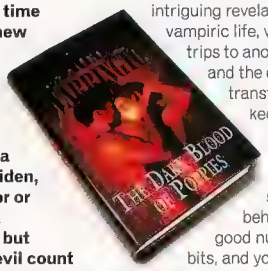
A-

The Dark Blood of Poppies

Author: **Freda Warrington**
Publisher: **Macmillan hardback**
Price/page count: **£14.99, 519pp**
ISBN: **0-333-63732-1**

B+

Text: **Karen Levell**



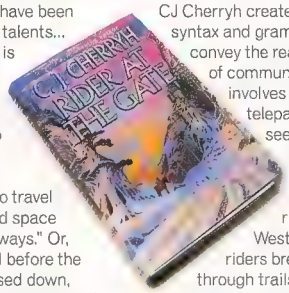
There was a time when you knew where you stood with a vampire story. You had a heroic young man, a virtuous maiden, a wise doctor or priest, and a charismatic but thoroughly evil count who tucked his pyjamas under a coffin lid. The author simply stirred in a few cloves of garlic, the odd crucifix and a good jug-full of holy water, and that was it. One solid, blood-sucking yarn, heavy on the horror.

Nowadays, of course, it's all different. Post-Anne Rice novelists have discarded the devices and clichés that carved out early Gothic fiction in favour of an altogether more subtle and evocative dish. Forget the bleak castles at the back-end of Eastern Europe. Here the monsters prowl the recesses of the psyche, wallowing in sombre tales of gut-destroying emotions.

Freda Warrington's vampire series, of which *A Dance in Blood Velvet* and *The Dark Blood of Poppies* are the second and third instalments, has its jaws firmly clamped around this modern-day take on the undead. The whole haemoglobin fest is viewed from the vampires' perspective, and focuses on the political ambitions and eternal triangles of its sharply drawn characters. As you spiral deeper into the vampires' subconscious, you are invited to share the eroticism of their blood lust and the remorse they feel over their killings.

Sewn among the rich character interplay are intriguing revelations about vampiric life, with regular trips to another dimension and the odd vampire transformation to keep you going. Add to that the razzmatazz of '30s society, the odd beheading and a good number of saucy bits, and you have a promising read. Somehow, though, in her desire to pick apart the vampire psyche, Warrington somewhat loses the momentum of the novels. And despite the admirable quality of her writing, you can't help feeling that deep down it's all just a little dull. In fact, just the sort of thing to slip into future A-level curriculums.

The opulent language is what really draws you in, though – and for those who delight in multi-layered characters, these latest instalments of vampiric angst are a must read. Personally, though, I prefer a lighter bite.



Rider at the Gate

Author: **CJ Cherryh**
Publisher: **Hodder & Stoughton hardback**
Price/page count: **£16.99, 304pp**
ISBN: **0-340-63827-3**
Text: **Sally Ann Melia**

Taking a fresh look at the recurring SF theme of telepathy, Hugo-winning and best-selling American author CJ Cherryh introduces us to a new and distant world, where all mammals are telepathic, and the highest evolved species – horses or nighthorses – can talk directly with humans.

In fact, the nighthorses yearn for human contact, each singling out their own "rider." These riders are thus willing and unwilling warrior protectors, and act as intermediaries between the human colonists and the planet's indigenous aliens.

CJ Cherryh is unmatched in her evocation of telepathy. The best moments come when horse and human, alien and rider work together or at odds, where they communicate by a small vocabulary of shared images, but inevitably never really understand each other. CJ Cherryh creates a whole syntax and grammar to convey the reality of a form of communication that involves only images – telepathy has never seemed so real. *Rider at the Gate* is also a rip-roaring Western, with lone riders breaking through trails by moonlight, remote villages set on by unspeakable horrors, and rival gangs fighting for spoils and gold in a pitiless outback.

This is a book begging for a sequel, and I look forward to *Rider at the Gate 2*. In the meantime, pick up the original. It's the nearest thing to real telepathy you're going to get.

B

Wizard's First Rule

Author: **Terry Goodkind**
Publisher: **Millennium paperback**
Price/ Page Count: **£5.99, 774pp**
ISBN: **1-85798-246-0**
Text: **Cavan Scott**

You could be forgiven for thinking that you've heard the plot of *Wizard's First Rule* before. Richard Cypher, a simple wood-guide, spots a beautiful damsel being stalked by four assassins. He intervenes and becomes involved in a quest to protect his beloved land from the magic of its neighbours.

Re-named the Seeker, a one-man judge and jury who is above any law, Richard must prevent a Dark Lord from collecting three enchanted boxes that will enslave millions to his tyrannical rule.

Before you skip the rest of the review, wait a second – despite this seemingly clichéd story-line, Goodkind's first novel is actually an inventive read. New life is breathed into old concepts, and you soon discover that this isn't just another run-of-the-mill "epic." The action is furious, with new trials and tribulations at every turn, and – more importantly – you'll find yourself caring about what happens to the main players. A promising debut novel that bodes well for future titles.

B+

Coming soon

The Nitpicker's Guide For Next Generation Trekkers: Volume 2
Phil Farrand, Titan **Nov '95**
More pedantic fun for people with too much spare time and perfect freeze-frame on their video recorder. Worryingly, these books are actually quite interesting, in a braindead sort of way.

The X-Files: Ground Zero
Kevin J Anderson, Voyager **Dec '95**
Mulder and Scully investigate mysterious deaths in a nuclear research plant, and discover "Bright Anvil," a new prototype nuclear bomb with virtually no fallout. Kevin J Anderson is interviewed in next month's SFX.

Incarnations: Three Plays
Clive Barker, Voyager **Jan '96**
A trio of stage scripts from Clive's early days, when he and Doug "Pinhead" Bradley were touring the country with a fringe theatre group. Includes the infamous "Frankenstein in Love."

Blue Mars
Kim Stanley Robinson, Voyager **Mar '96**
It started off red, then it was green, and now comes the final part of Robinson's acclaimed Mars trilogy. First editions of the other two volumes are already fetching good collector's prices.

The Salmon of Doubt
Douglas Adams, Hutchinson **Apr '96**
Exactly how optimistic are Adams' publishers being here? Douglas is writing this even as you read the magazine, but he's been "writing it" for nearly two years now, and it could be out any time between April and Christmas.

Best-selling SF Books

Jurassic Park 2 by any other name

Yes, ***The Lost World*** is about dinosaurs – but, no, it's not by Arthur Conan Doyle. It's the confusingly titled sequel to *Jurassic Park* and, not surprisingly, it's gone straight into the Forbidden Planet book chart at number one.

Good to see Ken MacLeod's debut novel ***The Star Fraction*** doing so well (no doubt helped by the recommendations of his mate Banksie), and congratulations to young Mr Rankin on scoring a "double whammy!"

The Forbidden Planet SF Book Chart

1. **The Lost World** Michael Crichton (Century)
2. **Showdown at Centrepoint** Roger MacBride Allen (Bantam)
3. **The Star Fraction** Ken MacLeod (Legend)
4. **The Most Amazing Man Who Ever Lived** Robert Rankin (Doubleday)
5. **The Garden of Unearthly Delights** Robert Rankin (Doubleday)
6. **The Two Georges** Richard Dreyfuss and Harry Turtledove (Hodder & Stoughton)
7. **Necroscope: The Lost Years** Brian Lumley (Hodder & Stoughton)
8. **The Diamond Age** Neal Stephenson (Viking)
9. **Belgarath the Sorceror** David and Leigh Eddings (HarperCollins)
10. **The Flag In Exile** David Weber (Baen)

"A Geof Darrow illustration is an amazing thing – it's so packed with detail it beggars belief..."

SOMETHING BIG...

...this way comes. It's also bold, and beautiful. And almost entirely pointless...

The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot **really stands out on the shelves – it's getting on for twice the size of most comics...**

The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot
Publisher: **Dark Horse/Legend**
Writer: **Frank Miller**
Artist: **Geof Darrow**
Issues: **1, 2**
Price: **£3.10 each**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

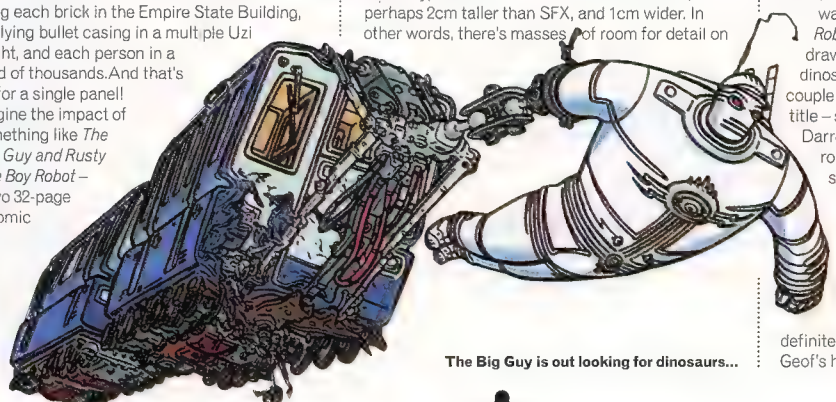
Now this is one *weird* comic. Frank Miller, of course, should be a familiar name to anyone with more than a passing interest in the comic books of the last 15 years or so. His work on characters like Batman and Daredevil – most notably in the Batman comics *Year One* and *The Dark Knight Returns* – has defined a certain hardboiled filmic style, more recently put to good use on creator owned projects like the *Sin City* and the Marsha Washington stories. To many people he is, quite simply, the guv'nor.

Geof Darrow is a less familiar name, but hardly less impressive. His forte – developed in Europe, and familiar in the US and over here mainly from his previous Miller collaboration, *Hard Boiled* – is to basically draw *everything*. A Geof Darrow illustration is an amazing thing – so packed with detail that he insists on drawing each brick in the Empire State Building, each flying bullet casing in a multiple Uzi firefight, and each person in a crowd of thousands. And that's just for a single panel! Imagine the impact of something like *The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot* – two 32-page comic books packed with the stuff! It begs the question, what is this guy on?

In terms of sheer madness, *The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot* is a step up from *Hard Boiled*. That first collaboration was an odd size – larger than a typical US comic – but this is massive, perhaps 2cm taller than SFX, and 1cm wider. In other words, there's masses of room for detail on each page, and Darrow doesn't waste it. At least *Hard Boiled*, being a retro-futuristic *Blade Runner* affair, allowed for a fair amount of variety in what was drawn. *The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot*, however, is 64 pages of the same thing, drawn over and over again. Basically, a giant dinosaur monster tries to level Tokyo, and a couple of robots – the Big Guy and Rusty of the title – set out to stop it. And that's it. Poor old Darrow has to draw the dinosaur, the two robots, the Tokyo cityscape and assorted screaming Japanese in almost every single picture.

We were going to count the number of tiny little Japanese people Geof Darrow's drawn, but nah...

A remarkable endeavour, then, but more gob-smacking than strictly enjoyable. The thing is, the story Miller's come up with – basically one big fight – is written like a pastiche of a '50s monster comic book, and, while fine in itself, definitely plays second fiddle to the visuals. Geof's hand must hurt like buggery...



The Big Guy is out looking for dinosaurs...

BATMAN: MANBAT

Publisher: **DC Comics**
Writer: **Jamie Delano**
Artist: **John Bolton**
Issues: **1**
Price: **£3.10**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

Blimey! This would seem to be the month of comics where the art heavily outweighs the story. That's not to say Jamie Delano's script for this Elseworlds story is as slim as Miller's for *The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot* – in this first issue, at least, it reads like a crime novel, perhaps one of Tony Hillerman's Native American-based affairs, and flows along nicely – but for many, Bolton's art, which has taken such a long time to complete, and is so beautiful, will be the main reason to snap this one up.

Elseworlds tales are what they used to call "Imaginary Stories" (as if the rest of them aren't): They're an established comics character, in this case Batman, taken out of his normal comic book continuity so that the creators can do pretty much

This sort of beautiful John Bolton artwork makes *Manbat* worth waiting for. Bat-fans, however, may feel that their hero is a bit left out of things...

anything they like with him. In this instance, it means Bolton can mess about with the bat-suit a bit – chiefly adding a massive belt, and stretching the ears to at least a foot long – and reintroduce Manbat, a character who, literally half man/half bat, was written out of normal *Batman* for being just too stupid looking. (At least I assume that's the case – I'm not *au fait* enough with DC superhero stuff to be sure.) Oh yes, and it also means Bolton can do a couple of shots of a pretty girl taking a shower too.

Manbat is a quality production all round – the tale of a family of half man/half bat crossbreeds living in a cave in the Arizona desert, and the threat to turn us all into a world of Manbats – and could develop in a number of interesting ways for the remaining two issues. Indeed, the only real fault, if fault it is, is that Batman himself appears in less than a third of the story, and then he only chases around after the other characters. Still, when they're as weird-yet-believable as this lot, it's not really that much of a problem.

The month in COMICS

TWO NEW VERTIGO MINI-SERIES, THE LATEST DC/MARVEL CROSSOVER, PLUS COMING SOON AND CHARTS.

MILLENNIUM FEVER

DC/Vertigo

Writer: **Nick Abadiz**
Artist: **Duncan Fegredo**
Issues: **1 (of 4)**
Price: **£1.50**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

This is the first of two rather similar new Vertigo books – both *Millennium Fever* and *Egypt* are limited series, feature young male British protagonists thrown into quite extraordinary circumstances, and laugh at the ridiculous idea of superheroes and other traditional comics fare.

Millennium Fever is the one actually set in Britain, and features the more innocent protagonist – a young black guy called Jerome, who's still at college, going to riotous parties, getting drunk and losing his virginity. It's only at the end of this first issue – when it looks like he's actually about to do, you know, *it* – that any element of the fantastic enters the story at all. Goodness knows what's going to happen next...

Nick Abadzis' script here is one of those unspectacular – but effortless, smoothly flowing and hip – things that a lot of British comic writers (unlike their American counterparts) do so well, and Duncan Fegredo is getting better all the time. His art here is nicely loose and sketchy, yet well composed and very real. My bedroom used to look exactly like the one on page 8, I'm sure I've been to the pub on page 17, and that's recognisably a Zippo on page 13. Nice one.

***Millennium Fever* and *Egypt* typify the Vertigo approach – smart, well-produced comics relying on SF/fantasy concepts, and a ban on superheroes.**

Sadly, *Egypt* drops Glyn Dillon's clean artwork very early on.

EGYPT

DC/Vertigo

Writer: **Peter Milligan**
Artist: **Glyn Dillon/Roberto Corona/Phil Gascoine**
Issues: **1, 2, 3**
Price: **£1.50 each**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

Peter Milligan's *Egypt* has some things in common with *Millennium Fever*, but appears to be a much more ambitious book.

The hero here is different to the sweet, innocent Jerome – a jaded, self-seeking git, living in New York off the women he screws, he's already been killed by a group of US students in a *Flatliners*-type experiment by the end of issue one, an operation that, somehow, sees him reborn in a version of ancient Egypt where the gods are real. By the end of issue three, his ghost's already come back to "the real world" and got its revenge on his murderers, leaving the remaining half of this mini-series to explore unknown territory.

As ever, Milligan's a clever, knowing writer, and though this doesn't appear to be as complex as his *Rogan Josh* collaboration with Brendan McCarthy, I'm not going to take anything for granted until we see the last issue. Sadly, Glyn (brother of *Preacher's* Steve) Dillon – who co-created the story with Milligan – appears to be off the drawing chores by issue two, and though Corona and Gascoine do a decent enough job, they're not in the same league.

Egypt's a good, solid, intriguing story with a magical element – and, as such, typical Vertigo fare. Recommended.

DARKSEID VS GALACTUS: THE HUNGER

DC Comics/Marvel Comics

Writer: **John Byrne**
Artist: **John Byrne**
Issues: **1**
Price: **£3.10**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

This is, unfortunately, the dog of the month – a bizarre situation when you're talking about a guy as talented as John Byrne, especially when he's come up with a story that pits two

Coming soon

The Horrorist **Nov**
A high quality two-part *Hellblazer* spin-off by original writer Jamie Delano and *V for Vendetta* artist David Lloyd.

Industrial Gothic **Nov**
Ted McKeever's weird art and weirder sensibilities come into their own in this "Fellini-esque" five-parter, packed with "abandoned factories and marauding gangs."

Glossy, nicely produced, but ultimately shallow Byrne fare...

of the heaviest bad guys from DC and Marvel against each other for the first time.

The basic story is thus: Galactus, world-devouring near-god of Marvel Comics, comes across Apokolips, the hellish world ruled over by chief DC villain Darkseid, and decides to devour it. Darkseid tries to stop him, while Galactus' herald, the Silver Surfer gets into a fight with Orion of the New Gods. And that's it really.

There are no real surprises, and the whole things plods along, with the ending leaving everything exactly the same as it begun. Boring and predictable.

Best-selling Comics

X-pelled!

We got bored of the ***X-Men*** titles topping this list every month, so we banned them... The result is this far more interesting chart, topped by Todd McFarlane's ***Spawn*** and Vertigo's top title, ***Sandman. Batman: Manbat, Spawn: Blood Feud*** and ***Sandman*** are all recommended (though anyone getting into *Sandman* at this late stage is likely to be mightily confused...).

The forbidden Planet Comic Chart

1. **Spawn** #35 Image
2. **Sandman** #72 DC
3. **Gen 13** #4 Image
4. **Cyblade** #1 Image
5. **Spawn: Blood Feud** #4 Image
6. **Amazing Scarlet Spider** #1 Marvel
7. **Dirty Pair – Fatal But Not Serious** #3 Dark Horse
8. **Star Wars – Sith War** #2 Dark Horse
9. **Batman: Manbat** #2 DC
10. **Web of the Scarlet Spider** #1 Marvel

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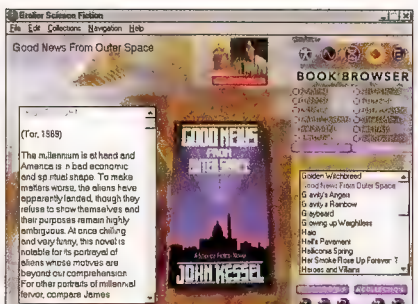
An easy-to-use and versatile SF reference book

Format: **PC CD-ROM**
Publisher: **Grolier Electronic Publishing**
Contact: **Koch Media ☎ (01252) 714340**
Available: **Out now**
Price: **£44.99**
ISBN: **0-7172-3999-3**

Text: **Simon Bisson**

John Clute and Peter Nicholl's award-winning *The Encyclopedia Of Science Fiction* is possibly *the* best book written about science fiction. There's one problem: It's 1,400 pages (and 4lbs) of bookcase-filling small print. Luckily for those of us who are running out of shelf space, this new, expanded, multimedia edition fits neatly on five inches of silver plastic. A CD-ROM has been promised ever since the book came out in 1993, and Grolier's multimedia edition has been well worth the wait.



***The Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* is so good, it really must be good news from outer space!**

The main title screen entices you to explore six themes of science fiction: Space, time, the alien, technology, the human mind and science fiction itself. Each theme is introduced by a well-designed digital movie, and by a series of filmed interviews with famous authors. While the movies are slickly produced, the interviews are more interesting – they're well presented and show something of both the character and the thoughts of some of science fiction's best known figures. Once you've watched the interviews, you can explore some of the CD-ROM's articles, before delving headfirst into the maze that is its bulging archives.

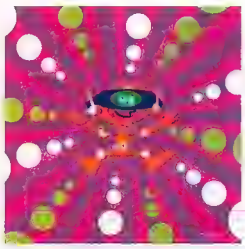
Each article is full of hypertext cross-references which enable you to explore the entire encylopedia with ease. You might start off tracking down an obscure Heinlein novel, for instance, only to find yourself reading about Big Dumb Objects (which turn out to be ringworlds, Dyson spheres, and other mega-structures, and not another Jim Carrey character), but only after a few detours via Kafka's influences on Absurdist science fiction, Entropy and James Blish's literary criticism. If you find something you want to go back to again and again, you can build up a collection of pointers to articles that you can then save for future reference.

But you don't have to explore using the article browser. A time line, which takes you through nearly 500 years of science fiction, is also included – taking in both Mary Shelley's original *Frankenstein* and Michael Crichton's modern myth, *Jurassic Park*. There are also plenty of links from this to one of the encyclopedia's most impressive features: The book browser. This contains synopses of over 300 of science fiction's best known books, as well as providing links that compare novels dealing with similar themes or subjects. Most entries are illustrated with the book's cover too (a mix of UK and American editions), so now you can find out what *Buddy Holly Is Alive and Well on Ganymede* looks like *before* you go trudging off to Forbidden Planet.

With over 4,500 articles, browsing through *The Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* is going to lead to a lot of eye and finger strain. Fortunately, help is at hand in the form of a powerful search facility which enables you to track down each tiny snippet of information. Just type in your query, click on a button, and up pops a list of relevant articles. (We found 32 references to a certain David Langford, for instance!)

There's much more information packed into this CD-ROM than there is in its printed predecessor – so much so that it's probably better to describe it as an entirely new edition of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. Certainly, with several of the editorial team hard at work on the forthcoming *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, it's probably the last edition we'll see for a few years.

Well researched, well designed and packed full of information, *The Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* is a must buy for the wired SF fan.



The month in NEW MEDIA

Our first look at a title for Sony's lauded PlayStation.

WIPEOUT

Format: **PlayStation**
Price: **£44.99**
Producer: **Sony Interactive Studios**
Release: **Out now**
Text: **Steve Jarratt**

The launch of Sony's PlayStation has opened up all sorts of avenues for high-tech interactive SF-related chicanery, thanks to its superior graphics, and CD-generated video and audio.

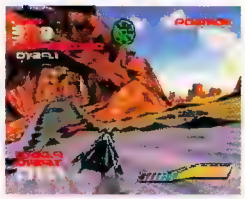
Star billing of the launch catalogue must go to *Wipeout* – one of the fastest, slickest, best-looking racing games *ever*...

Set at some vague point in the future, *Wipeout* follows the fortunes of the F3600 hovership racing championship, where changing tyres and pit-stopping for fuel are no more – and all you have to worry about is unleashing missiles and mines at the opposition.

But the thing that really sets *Wipeout* apart from other racers is the frighteningly realistic visuals. From a few feet away, *Wipeout* really does resemble broadcast TV, rather than the outcome of some clever-clever polygon-shuffling program.

And it's rather good fun to play, too – although gaming novices may find the controls a bit daunting initially. These hovercar things don't steer very well, so you'll spend the first few hours crashing into walls, swaying nauseatingly from side to side and swearing a lot. But once that's clicked into place, *Wipeout* makes for an exhilarating, exciting and thoroughly captivating gaming experience.

Oh, and if you've got a friend with a PlayStation and a copy of *Wipeout* lying around, you can go head-to-head for some entirely unhealthy competitive action.



Pure out-and-out racing is what makes the breathtakingly good-looking *Wipeout* such a thrilling experience. Still screenshots can't really do it justice...

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MODEL Reviews

"Bandai's original *Trek* series tricorder (SFX4; A) was great, but this phaser is even better."

PHASERS ON STUN!

Indistinguishable from the real thing, this lot!

STAR TREK ORIGINAL SERIES PHASER

Price: **£14.99**

STAR TREK: TNG PHASER TYPE 1 & 2

Price: **£10.99 each**

Manufacturer: **Bandai**
Contact: **Any good model shop**

Text: **Matt Bielby**

When I was (a lot) younger, I remember being allowed to stay up late to watch *Star Trek*. I remember play-fights in the street, where my mates go to be Kirk or Spock and I ended up being either Bones or Scotty (or a Klingon for the others to beat up). And I remember, oh-so-vividly, what I would have given to own a *real Star Trek* phaser. Well, now, of course, I can, and for under 20 quid too. Kids today, they don't know they're born...

We looked at Bandai's original *Trek* series tricorder in Toys and Models (SFX4; A), and jolly impressive it was too, but this companion piece phaser handgun is something else. Yes, it makes decent enough sounding phaser noises (one for stun; one which is euphemistically termed "a higher setting"), but the real joy is in the way it looks – which is exactly like the original. I don't see how anyone brought up on Kirk, Spock and co could possibly see this and resist buying it.

And seeing as this is a slow month for toys, we may as well take this opportunity to look at the later period *Star Trek: The Next Generation* phasers too - those brought up on Picard, Riker, Data and friends may, in fact, prefer these *TNG* models to the original anyway. They appear just as convincing and well made. Two are available – the Type 1 phaser, which is a small handheld thing, kind of like a small electric shaver, and the larger Type 2 (kind of like, er, a larger electric shaver). Quite why Starfleet insists on having two different models when they both emit exactly the same strength beam (it says here), I don't know, unless it's simply to flatter the egos of the senior officers, who get to carry around the flashier, more compact prop. If you ask me, though, there's a bit of a problem with the *TNG* props – they're nowhere near as evocative or special looking as the clunkier original series weapon. But perhaps that's just an old man talking...

The Type 1 phaser is this small, hand-held device, as used by the likes of Jean-Luc Picard. Very nice...

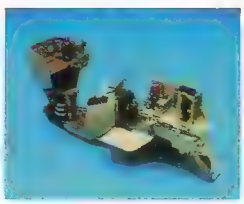
...as is the larger Type 2 version (left), but both pale in comparison with the classic original series handgun (above). Now this really *is* the business...

The month in MODELS

NOT VERY MUCH ROOM FOR US THIS MONTH, SO LET'S GET ON WITH IT...

TYPE 2 PHASER MINI PLAYSET

Manufacturer: **Bandai**
Price: **£7.99**
Contact: **Any good toy or model shop**
Text: **Matt Bielby**



Break open the phaser playset, and you get all this great stuff...

While we're on the subject of phasers, you might also be interested in this *TNG* phaser playset (you can get a version of the same thing based on the *TNG* tricorder). It looks like a phaser, but opens up to reveal a little play area, subdivided into different sections (with names like "rebel cave" and "security force office"), and comes complete with a handful of tiny *The Next Generation* figures.

The idea's quite neat, and though the result doesn't appeal to me quite as much as the more accurate replica props reviewed next door, you *can* see how it would appeal to kids – the two-toys-in-one idea and all that. The tricorder version, by the way, opens up to reveal a med-bay play area, which doesn't sound quite as exciting as the phaser's more action-orientated interiors...

...then you can fold it all up and go out fighting Klingons with it.

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Biggest issue yet! 23-page new season TV feature, Lis Sladen, *Judge Dredd* on the radio, Brian Aldiss, Worldcon '95 and four free art prints. Wow!
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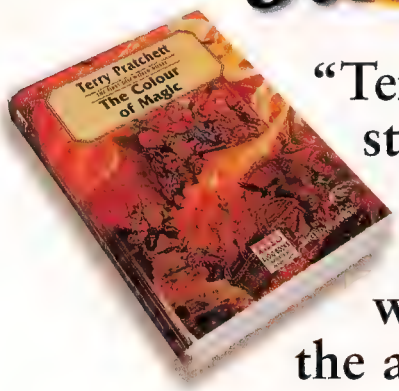
TOSH Reviews



"Terry Pratchett's stories are begging to be read aloud – and work wonderfully in the aural medium."

THE COLOUR OF MAGIC

Author: **Terry Pratchett**
Read by: **Nigel Planer**
Label: **Isis Audio Books**
Running time: **7 hrs, 15 mins**
Price: **£19.99**
ISBN: **1-85695-800-0**

Text: **MJ Simpson**

What can we say about this book that hasn't been said already? It's the first in the *Discworld* series, and the title that introduced the reading public to Rincewind, Twoflower and, of course, Luggage. An abridged reading has been available for some time on two cassettes (read by Tony Robinson), but only now is the full version being released as a six-cassette pack, running to a little over seven hours.

Nigel Planer has an excellent reading style and provides a good variety of identifiable voices. Rincewind sounds like Neil from *The Young Ones*, but given how put upon the character is, that's not surprising. If, like me, you haven't read *TCOM* for a long time, though, it comes as something of a surprise to find that, stylistically, it's very much on a par with the rest of the series. More to the point, *all* his tales are simply begging to be read aloud, and would work wonderfully in the aural medium.

The perfect accompaniment to a lengthy journey, *TCOM* is a very worthwhile buy. Isis plans to release all the *Discworld* novels in this format over the next couple of years, kicking off with *TCOM* and *The Light Fantastic* (at 6 hrs, 50 mins, ISBN 1-85695-831-0, £19.99). *Mort* and *Sourcery* follow in November.

A

GODZILLA: KING OF THE MONSTERS

What is it? **"Wind-Up Walking Monster Action Playset"**
Manufacturer: **Bluebird**
Price: **£5.99, with free "Hatching Monster"**
From: **Forbidden Planet**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

This is terrific! It's a reasonably detailed model of the Big G, 10cm high, and about the same length from front to back. Aficionados of Japanese monster movies – *kaiju eiga* to give them their correct name – will recognise this incarnation as the one from the most recent movies; everyone else will just recognise Godzilla.

The great aspect of this toy is the wind-up motor which powers not only Godzilla's legs, but also his arms and jaws. He really is quite fearsome as he stomps along the desk-top.

But wait, there's more. Because this is an "action playset," you also get a little tank and a couple of soldiers for your money. You can put these in Godzilla's path, then watch them being swept away by the unstoppable power of the world's mightiest monster!

Also available in this series are Mecha-Godzilla and Mecha-Ghidorah. And if you buy your Monster Action Playset from Forbidden Planet, you get a free Hatching Monster – basically a plastic egg which cracks open to reveal a small (5cm) rubber monster. Mothra, Godzilla, Mecha-Godzilla, Ghidorah and Rodan are all available in this form.

Good models, good value – and great monsters!

A

The month in TOSH

DOCTOR WHO AND TREK EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR... DEEP JOY!

DOCTOR WHO RADIO TIMES 1996 CALENDAR

Distributor: **Slow Dazzle Worldwide**
Price: **£9.99**
Available: **Out now**
Text: **Dave Golder**

Erm, well, the title says it all really – a calendar boasting 12 gen-u-ine *Radio Times* covers, one to go with each month, and all featuring Doctor Who.

Arranged in – shock! – chronological order, January kicks off with the programme's first front cover appearance in February 1964, boasting a startlingly un-eye-catching still from "Marco Polo," while the calendar takes us right up to the show's 30th Anniversary cover from November 1993. In December. If you get my drift.

The quality of the covers varies enormously *en route*. From photo montages to comic strips to airbrushed artwork, just about every possible approach to sticking *Who* on the cover has been tried out. Rather ominous, however, is the fact that the first ten years of the show's life uses up months January to October, while the next 20 years fill up the November and December slots; a sure sign if ever there was one that things weren't going well near the end...

The actual calendar handily dates points of interest (and some of not much interest), such as the opening date of *Daleks: Invasion Earth 2150AD*, Jon Pertwee's birthday, and the first appearances of the various companions (and monsters) in the series, as well as telling you when issues of something called *Doctor Who Magazine* are published. Pity the months are in the wrong order... No, I jest..

Despite the dodgy quality of some of the covers photographed (they could have found a 1993 one in better condition, surely?) and the rather flimsy paper it's printed on, this is an intriguing new twist on *Doctor Who* calendars of the past. And at least you don't get that bloody picture of Jon Pertwee driving Bessie again.

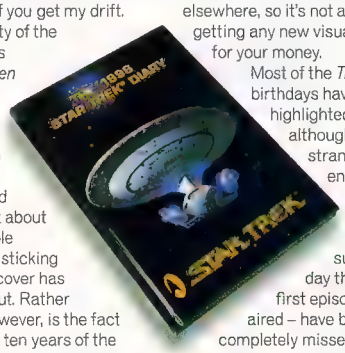
B

1996 STAR TREK DIARY

Publisher: **Simon & Schuster**
Price: **£9.99**
ISBN: **0-671-85515-8**
Released: **Out now**
Text: **Dave Golder**

Resisting the temptation to make any jokes about star dates *(clichéd, moi?)*, let's have a butchers at next year's fantastically exciting *Star Trek* diary (cynical, us?).

To be fair, it's pretty much a book version of all four *Star Trek* calendars (reviewed in issue four) – and has all the same plus points and faults. Printed on luxuriously glossy paper and superbly designed, it's packed with stills from all four *Trek* series and the movies. Unfortunately, the reproduction on many of the pictures seems to be in dodgy blur-o-vision, and you'll have seen most of them in magazines and articles elsewhere, so it's not as if you're getting any new visual material for your money.



Most of the *Trek* actors' birthdays have been highlighted, although, strangely enough, the chance to point out dates – such as the day the very first episode was aired – have been completely missed.

At a tenner, it's relatively expensive for a diary too, but, hey, there are a million worse ways for licensees to make a buck out of fans, and at least the '96 diary is a quality product which does what it's supposed to do. Still, we reckon a pocket-sized version would've been more practical, and probably cheaper too.

B

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Very rare comic available: *X-Files* No.1, US edition, 1st original by Topps – £65. Also other sci-fi items including some books. Cheques are acceptable. Contact: Mark Thyne, 16 Greenview, Longwel Green, Bristol BS15 6UB.

Star Wars to Jedi comics (UK) from 1978-85 issues 1, 3, 12-12, 17-19, 22-23, 25-26, 30-33, 35, 37, 39-42, 46, 49-50, 53-59, 59, 61, 64, 67-72, 74, 76, 78-81, 84, 86-87, 91, 94, 96-98, 100-102, 105, 107, 111-114, 117, 120-121, 124, 126, 129-132, 134, 136 *Return of the Jedi* 3-4, 7-8, 87 Mark Finch, 30 Byrne Rd, Balham, London SW12 9JD.

First issue X-Files (UK), including cover-mounted badge in excellent condition, phone with offers ☎ (0161) 962 3891, Jason, after 5pm.

Private collection of Marvel, DC, independent comics for sale. 1960s to 1980s. Please send list of interests to: D Temple, 5 Christopher Gdns, Dagenham, Essex RM9 5YB.

Make it so: **One of the rarest Trek collectables** around. Only 200 numbered CDs were made to celebrate the release of *Star Trek: Generations*. Heard at the *Generations* convention in London where an unsigned copy went for £300. I have disc No. 4, signed by Majel Barrett, for sale for £250 or nearest offer. Phone Matthew on ☎ (01382) 738442 to discuss sale.

Star Trek & ST: TNG autographs for sale. Please send for free list to D Hicks, 405 Chertsey Rd, Whitton, Twickenham TW2 6LS.

I'm forced to part with my collection of movie T-shirts (all unworn, of course) including: *True Lies, Full Metal Jacket, Jungle Book* (live action version), *Jurassic Park, Hard Boiled* (flak jacket), etc. All XL. Any offers please? Brian Morris, 26 Common Rd, Ingrave, Brentwood, Essex CM13 3QL.

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WANTED

Wanted – **any Danger Mouse material at all,** plates, comic strips, copies of *Look-In*, etc. Cheap please! Write to S Ockenden, 5 Newport Rd, Woolstone, Milton Keynes, MK15 0AR. Thank you!

Pierce Brosnan (new 007) material wanted: Cuttings, video, posters, lobbies, pressbooks, etc. Will buy or trade with other collectors. Contact: Kimberly Last, 452 N Wesley Dr, Addison, IL 60101, USA or e-mail klast@mcs.com.

Wanted: **Episodes of sci-fi TV shows**, such as *Quantum Leap, The Invaders, Outer Limits* (old & new), *Twilight Zone* (old), *UFO, Alien Nation*, & if possible, episodes from the first two *Quatermass* serials. Prices are negotiable, but would consider trading for other episodes, *V, B5, X-Files, Trek, Doctor Who, Planet of the Apes*, etc. Eddy Taylor, 430 Queslett Rd, Great Barr, B'ham B43 7EL.

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Wanted: Anything or everything to do with the **films of Stanley Kubrick.** Please contact: Chris Watt, 45 Springbank Tce, Peterhead, Aberdeenshire AB42 6WB ☎ (01779) 470246.

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PENPALS

Male, aged 38, all areas of science fiction & horror/TV, seeks female/male 35+ who likes the same thing. Mr RJ Buer, 4 Featherstone Road, Exmouth, Devon EX8 3JH.

Wanted: **Male or female The X-Files and/or Batman Forever fans** (serious, near-obsessed fans only please) to write to & exchange gossip, news, etc. on both! Any age, all replies answered. I'm 20 years old, obsessive about good comics & sci-fi films/TV, & I'm desperate to write to people much the same. Sharon Morse, 503 Coed-y-Gores, Llanedeyrn, Cardiff, South Wales.

Male, interested in Anne Rice, Clive Barker, Stephen King, Poppy Z Brite, Iain Banks, William Gibson, vampires, Oasis, The Cranberries, Velvet Underground, Elastica, Suede, Pulp, body-piercing, etc. seeks like-minded female lost souls for correspondence. Ryan Valentine, 9 Chestnut Rd, Dartford, Kent.

Enthusiastic 24 year old *Generations/DS9/Vampire Chronicles* fan desperately seeking soulmates. Write to: Ceri, 34 Lugtrout Lane, Solihull, West Midlands B91 2SB

Female, 18, into movies, books/comics, HR Giger, *X-Files*, Therapy?, *L7, RATM, NIN*, serial killers *Trek*, clubs, gigs, festivals, cats, lizards, games, photography, painting/drawing, Orb, anything strange; looking for creatures to write to. Age/sex irrelevant, sense of humour essential. Photo appreciated. Satu Turpeinen, Kiramontie 1, 81720 Lieksa, Finland.

Many interests, likes *X-Files, Trek*, most SF books, will answer most. Helen Anderson, 36 Stobart Tce, Fishburn, Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland TS21 4AF.

Let's write! 23 year old who likes cult TV, films, music, etc. would like penpals of any type to swap news, views & ideas with. Write to: Brad, 11 Grangeway, Smallfield, Surrey RH6 9LZ.

I will write to any Babylon 5 fans (M/F), any age. Likes – *B5, X-Files, X-Men & Dredd*. Dislikes – *Trek, DS9*, etc. Michael Molcher, 56 London Rd, Daventry, Northants NN11 4EA.

15 year old seeks pen pal of roughly same age, male or female. Interests: *X-Files, Trek, Star Wars, B5*, Stephen King books, reading & finding good excuses to get out of homework. Paul Fortune, 38 Franklin Close, West Norwood, London SE27 0PT.

Calling all Dwarfers, Trekkies & X-Philes! If you're a fan of any & all sci-fi movies & TV or books, write to me! Also, anyone with an interest in horror books & movies should drop me a line. I'm waiting. Mr Paul Johnson, 17 Poplar Ave, Tiewsley, West Drayton, Middlesex OB7 8LF.

Conventions

Lightspeed '96 Star Trek convention, at Leeds Hilton National Hotel. Guests (subject to work commitments): Mr Andrew Robinson (Garak of *DS9*) & Dr Jack Cohen (scientist). Lots of videos, dealers, competitions & more over the weekend of 13-15 Sep 1996. Registration fee £35. Details from: Lightspeed Conventions, 16 Bramwell St, Rotherham, S Yorks S65 1RZ.

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Babylon 5 UK Fan Club, PO Box 1147, London W3 7ZT. Send standard SAE for membership details. This is the original *Babylon 5* fan club & publisher of *The 5 Times* newsletter.

Octarine, SF & Fantasy Humour Appreciation Society. Honorary members: Terry Pratchett, Robert Rankin, (coming soon!) Harry Harrison. Year's membership – UK £5, EEC £6, ROTW £8 gets you four copies of zine plus exclusive merchandise, T-shirts, etc. Write to: Octarine, 2 Egerton Drive, Stapleford, Nottingham NG9 8HE.

MISCELLANEOUS

Shaun Amey Sep '85. If you need some connections, get hold of the "knowledge." It finished printing four years ago, but I have a copy. Get my address from SFX and I will mail you the wanted names. PS. It seems to me that this game is all about contacts, you might be able to help me soon. Russell Baynes, 16 Sheering Mill Lane, Sawbridgeworth, Herts CM21 9LP.

If you love sci-fi/fantasy & drawing computer graphics on PC, Amiga or Atari then get in touch. Freehand, animation, digitising, raytracing – all welcome. Possible SFX & fantasy graphic artists zine. Write to Rich, 10 Oak Dr, Portishead, Bristol BS20 8QS. Please include an SAE – all disks returned if requested. Done for the love of the pixel, not the pound.

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SIXTH FESTIVAL OF FANTASTIC FILMS

SACHAS HOTEL, MANCHESTER, 22-24 SEPTEMBER

The Festival of Fantastic Films has been running for six years now, and attracts cinephiles from all over the UK (and abroad), keen to spend a weekend watching – and discussing – classic and obscure movies. **MJ Simpson** went to investigate, armed with plenty of popcorn...

This was an interesting experience for a regular con-goer like myself, who normally has better things to do than sit in a dark room watching films. At the sixth FFF, the whole *point* of the con was sitting in dark rooms watching films. And what great films they were too! *Nosferatu, The Virgin of Nuremberg, Varan the Unbelievable,* all three *Quatermass* flicks, a night of Universal Studios horrors...

There were many guests on hand: Ann Robinson remembered starring in *War of the Worlds;* Barbara Shelley told of making *Cat Girl* and *Quatermass and the Pit;* director Robin (*The Wicker Man)* Hardy spilt a few anecdotes; while the legendary Roger Corman introduced *Attack of the Crab Monsters* and *Not of this Earth.* Also present were author Ramsey Campbell and director Norman J Warren *(Inseminoid, Prey).*

The FFF also covered new, low-budget movies, including *Demon Soul* and the first batch of Screen Edge video releases *(The Pope of Utah,* etc). On the Sunday, Corman, Hardy, Warren *et al* hosted a debate on the problems of making movies on a tight budget.

With three 16mm/8mm cinemas and a video room, plus a few panels, an exciting dealers' room (and bar!), there was, if anything, slightly *too* much to do at this year's FFF. Still, it was a huge success, with many clearly eager to return for more in '96.

Poster and memorabilia frenzy! It was incredibly easy to spend more than you wanted to inside the Festival of Fantastic Films' small but perfectly formed dealers' room.

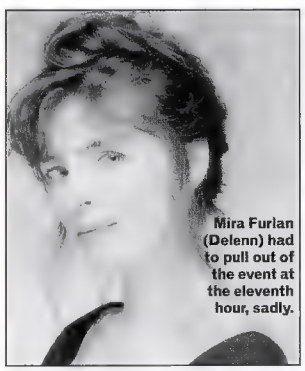
"There was, if anything, slightly *too* much to do at this year's excellent FFF."

WOLF 359: THE GATHERING

SACHAS HOTEL, MANCHESTER, 15-18 SEPTEMBER

The first few Wolf 359 conventions were primarily *Star Trek*-orientated, but recently the close involvement of the committee with the UK *Babylon 5* Fan Club has brought a shift in focus to include more *Babylon 5* content. '95's event continued this trend, taking its subtitle, The Gathering, from *Babylon 5's* pilot episode, and featuring a smart line-up of guests.

Although Mira Furlan (Delenn) had to cancel because of an eye infection, the roster featured names like *B5* creator JM Straczynski, Majel Barret Roddenberry (Lwaxana Troi), Michael O'Hare (Commander Sinclair), *Trek* novelist and former assistant to William Shatner, Sonny Cooper, as well as SF stand-up comic, George Marshall. A surprise replacement for Furlan was *B5's* Mr Morden, alias actor Ed Wasser.



Mira Furlan (Delenn) had to pull out of the event at the eleventh hour, sadly.

The *B5* men and Mrs Roddenberry were the darlings of the crowd, all of them tirelessly signing autographs, and Straczynski wowed audiences with his advance screenings of eight unfinished scenes from season three, as well as the highly amusing blooper reels – watching Bruce Boxleitner describing a ship exiting the jumpgate as a "big motherfucker" brought the house down.

While there was a degree of hotel shenanigans afoot, including a

ALIENS '95

BRISTOL UNIVERSITY, 24 SEPTEMBER

Giger's alien has acquired a huge following since its first appearance in *Alien* in 1979.

Held in the impressive surroundings of Bristol University's Wills Memorial Building, the first *Aliens* convention in Britain in two years attracted around 200 fans.

But despite having to pay £26 to get in, and being treated to a sparse range of merchandise (including model chestbursters and made-to-measure Hicks uniforms), the punters were happy with the event. Tom Kish, from Norwalk, Connecticut, commented: "I've been to several US shows, and none of the stalls have offered the rare quality of items I've found here."

Top of the bill was an interview with William Hope (*Aliens'* Commander Gorman), who looked the true thesp he's become since taking to the English stage. Hope, despite the admission that he hadn't seen *Alien*³, provided some interesting insights into James Cameron's way of working.

"When I first saw the script, I thought this would look like *Thunderbirds,*" he admitted. "But Jim understands every aspect of the film-making process. From his design background, he is able to, unusually for Hollywood, deliver exactly what's written on paper."

More revealing was armourer – and designer of the Marine bodywear in the second and third movies – Terry English. He too praised Cameron, labelling him a perfectionist, unlike *Alien*³ director, David Fincher: "He didn't have a clue. He had no vision."

The day's discussion veered towards a possible fourth movie. Ideas ranged from resurrecting Ripley using a DNA sample to discovering she was a cyborg.

With profits going to Cancer Research, organiser Stephen Nelmes hailed *Aliens '95* a huge success, despite the non-appearance of guest star Paul McGann. Hopefully, the proposal of a London venue for next year's event should ensure a greater attendance.

James Mottram

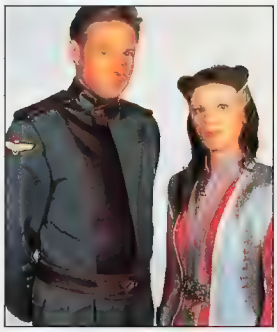
If you want to join the Alien Trilogy fanclub, contact S Nelmes at 8 Victoria Close, Thornbury, Bristol, Avon BS12 1JE.

furnace-like main hall with poor air conditioning, the con ran smoothly, if a little late. When George Marshall presented his amusing one-man *TNG* play, we all sympathised as we watched the sweat dripping off. It was also a pleasant surprise to find yourself rubbing shoulders with the guests at parties, in the bar, the restaurant and the dealers' room.

Despite some worries about the bad publicity Wolf 359 received at the recent BABCOM in Ireland, the weekend was a huge success. And there can't be many cons which boast a wedding – the ceremony took place on the Saturday in full Starfleet regalia, and the bride was given away by Michael O'Hare!

The only drawback was the lack of supporting programme to the guests and videos, and the absence of a suitable closing ceremony.

Jim Swallow



JMS showed the audience some outtakes from season three – Bruce Boxleitner (left) describing one ship rather, shall we say, "colourfully," was a real highlight.

FANTASTIC DAYS

Dates for your diary

All conventions listed here are non-profit-making events organised by fans, unless otherwise stated. Always enclose an SAE with enquiries. Convention organisers, if your event is not mentioned here or your listing is wrong or incomplete, send details to Live!, SFX, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW

27-29 October 1995
Phoenix
Trek/media con at Apollo Hotel, Birmingham. Guests: **Dave Prowse, Jeremy Bulloch, Jim Swallow. 112 The Normans, Wexham, Slough SL2 5TU**

27-30 October 1995
Cult TV
Telefantasy con at Haven All-Action Centre, Great Yarmouth. Guests: **Chris Carter, Brian Clemens, Kenneth Cope, Michelle Forbes, Bill Baggs, Ed Bishop, Annette Andre,** etc. **PO Box 1701, Peterborough PE1 1EX**

28 October 1995
Talk by **Stephen Baxter, Keith Brooke** and **Peter F Hamilton. Peterborough Museum, Priestgate, Peterborough**

3-5 November 1995
Novacon 25
Annual SF con at Chamberlain Hotel, Birmingham. Guests: **Brian Aldiss, Iain Banks, Harry Harrison, Bob Shaw. Carol Morton, 14 Park St, Lye, Stourbridge, West Mids DY9 8SS**

3-5 November 1995
ReContainmeTed
Anime con at Grand Hotel, Colmore Row, Birmingham. No under-12s. Under-18s must be accompanied by an adult. **Martin Pay, 29 Langton Ave, Chelmsford CM1 2BW**

17-19 November 1995
Armadacon VII
Multi-media SF/fantasy con at Astor Hotel, Plymouth. Guest: **John Carrigan. 4 Gleneagle Ave, Mannamead, Plymouth, Devon PL3 5HL**

18-19 November 1995
Assimilation
Trek/media con at Friendly Hotel, Milton Keynes. Guests: **Jon Pertwee, Nicholas Courtney, George Marshall, Terry Shuttleworth. Stuart Banks, 77 Holyrood Ave, South Harrow, Middx HA2 8UD**

2-4 February 1996
Starbase 96
Trek con at Hilton National, Leeds. **Miss Carol Looby, 152 Otley Rd, Headingly, Leeds LS16 5JX**

10-11 February 1996
Star Fleet Ball
Trek con at Royal Bath Hotel, Bournemouth. **Anne Lindup, "Five Elms," Holtwood, Nr Wimborne, Dorset BH21 7DT**

15-17 March 1996
The Neutral Zone
Trek con at Forte Crest Hotel, Newcastle. Guest: **Bjo Trimble. 16 Annandale, Darlington, Co. Durham DL1 3QX**

29-31 March 1996
48 Hours In Space
TVSF marathon at **Comfort Friendly Inn, Hull. Hull Starfleet, PO Box 1701, Hull HU4 7YU**

5-8 April 1996
Evolution
47th National SF Con (Eastercon) at Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow. Guests: **Vernor Vinge, Colin Greenland, Bryan Talbot, Jack Cohen, Maureen Speller, Paul Kincaid. 13 Lindfield Gdns, Hamstead, London NW3 6PX or bmh@ee.ic.ac.uk or http://www.tardis.ed.ac.uk/~simon/evolve/**

12-14 April 1996
Accelerate 96
Quantum Leap con at Radisson Edwardian, Heathrow. Guest: **John D'Aquino. 78 Sterry Rd, Dagenham, Essex RM10 8NT or Accelerate@pbayliss.demon.co.uk or ☎ (01827) 64911**

2-6 May 1996
Warp Two
41st UK *Trek* con at Cardiff International Arena. Guests: **Robert Picardo, Nana Visitor, Walter Koenig, Mark Lenard, Richard Arnold. David Simons, Warp Two, 69 Merlin Cres, Edgeware, Middx HA8 6JB**

24-27 May 1996
Inconsistent
SF humour con at **Scotch Corner Hotel, Darlington. Flat 1, 31 Saxon Rd, South Norwood, London SE25 5EQ**

28-30 June 1996
Discworld Convention 1996
Pratchett con at Britannia Sachas Hotel, Manchester. Guests: **Terry Pratchett, Stephen Briggs, Josh Kirby. PO Box 3086, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 6LD or discworld@cmacleod.demon.co.uk**

5-7 July 1996
Constitution III
Trek con at Tollgate Motel, Gravesend, Kent. **Tina Hewett, 115 The Brent, Dartford, Kent DA1 1YH**

23-26 August 1996
Concorde
42nd UK *Trek* con at **Radisson Edwardian, Heathrow. Concorde Registrations,138 Crosslands, Stantonbury, Milton Keynes MK14 6DF**

13-15 September 1996
Lightspeed '96
Trek con at Leeds Hilton National. Guests: **Andrew Robinson, Jack Cohen. Lightspeed Conventions, 16 Bramwell St, Rotherham, South Yorks. S65 1RZ**

25-28 October 1996
Cult TV 1996
More TV fun at **Haven Centre, Caister. (Same address as Cult TV '95.)**

26-27 October 1996
Who's 7 Strikes Back!
Doctor Who/*Blake's 7* con at **Ashford International Hotel, Ashford. 10 Fillebrook Hall, Fillebrook Rd, Leytonstone, London E11 1AG or lexin@cix.compulink.co.uk.**

8-10 November 1996
Novacon 26
Annual SF con at Ibis Hotel, Birmingham. Guest: **David Gemmell. 14 Park St, Lye, Stourbridge, West Mids DY9 8SS**

28-31 March 1997
Intervention
The '97 Eastercon. Guests: **Brian Aldiss, Jon Bing, Octavia Butler, David Langford. 12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hants PO10 7TS or intervention@pompey.demon.co.uk**

22-25 August 1997
Terok Nor
44th UK *Trek* con at **Radisson Edwardian, Heathrow. 43 Eastern Ave, Polegate, East Sussex BN26 6HG**

Please note: All details correct at time of going to press.

SFX

The Science Fiction Magazine

#5 November 1995

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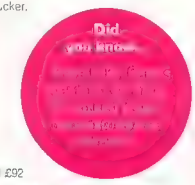

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This month the SFX team loved: The US TV trailer for "The Way of the Warrior," the Worf-starring opener for season four of *DS9*; Darth Vader fighting a dinosaur in *The Indian in the Cupboard* (yes, really); and Pulp

Competitions

WIN! WIN!

TALKING PRATCHETT BOOKS, STREET FIGHTER 2 VIDEOS...

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Theory Of Evolution Compo

Evolution @ Intersection, an SF bibliophile's dream, was distributed at this year's Worldcon to promote next year's Eastercon. It features nine SF greats writing about the Evolution guests: Neil Gaiman on Bryan Talbot, Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle on Jack Cohen, Marvin Minsky on Vernor Vinge, David Langford and Chris Priest on Maureen Speller and Paul Kincaid, Geoff Ryman and Michael Moorcock on Colin Greenland, and Jim Burns on painting Colin's covers; plus artwork by Burns, Jim Porter and SMS. Only a limited number were produced and we have 25 to give away. You can win one by telling us the title of Colin Greenland's last novel. Mark your entry Theory Of Evolution Compo. (For more info on next year's Eastercon, send an SAE to the address in Fantastic Days on the previous page.)

Rincewind & Twoflower Compo

Unlike many talking books, those published by Isis Publishing Ltd are complete and unabridged. The latest additions to its catalogue are the first two *Discworld* novels – *The Colour of Magic* (reviewed on page 98) and *The Light Fantastic* – both read by Nigel Planer. Each book takes up six cassettes, and runs for about seven hours – and we're giving away both to five lucky readers! To win both sets, tell us the title of Terry Pratchett's first published book. Mark your entry Rincewind & Twoflower Compo.

WIN!

Cartoon Kickboxing Capers Compo

Street Fighter 2: The Animated Movie **was a staggeringly successful piece of anime when released in Japan, and now it's available in the UK, courtesy of those fine folk at Manga Video. Ken, Ryu and all their chums actually look like they do in the computer game, and they have all the original special moves at their disposal too! We have ten copies to give away, and one winner will also receive a stylish *Street Fighter 2: The Animated Movie* T-shirt for his or her efforts. Just tell us which Aussie pop singer starred in the live action version of *Street Fighter*. Mark your entry Cartoon Kickboxing Capers Compo.**

Regeneration Game Compo

While *Doctor Who* fans wait for the new series, they can amuse themselves with a new documentary video from Bill Baggs of *The Stranger* fame. We have six copies of *The Doctors: 30 Years of Time Travel & Beyond* (as reviewed last issue) to give away, courtesy of those fine fellows and lasses at Master Vision. To win one, tell us the title of the final *Doctor Who* adventure to be broadcast (so far). Mark your entry Regeneration Game Compo.

Send all your competition entries to:

[Compo name]
SFX
Future Publishing
30 Monmouth Street
Bath, Avon
BA1 2BW

Those ridiculous but important rules and regulations in full...

1. [illegible]
2. [illegible]
3. [illegible]
4. Winners' names will be published in the **January** issue of SFX. **Tuesday 2 December**.
5. No correspondence will be entered into about the competitions.

THOSE LUCKY WINNERS FROM SFX3:

KING SIZE BED COMPO
Stephen King wrote *The Running Man* as Richard Bachman. A limited edition copy of *Insomnia*, plus pillowcase and T-shirt go to Ms Marina JA Holroyd of Manchester. Ordinary copies of *Insomnia* (plus pillowcases and T-shirts) are winging their way to: Mark Howard, Maidstone; David Morris, Essex; Paul Keen, Herts; Mr Lloyd Garrett, Strood; Ms M Varney, Nottingham; Allen Shute, Merseyside; Mark Fagan, Runcorn; Mr DA Watkin, Nottingham; KJ Lyons, Ilkeston; and Andrew Jebb Belfast.

DO NOT GO GENTLY INTO THAT DARK KNIGHT COMPO
Annette Bening would have played Catwoman if she hadn't caught Egyptian Flu. Videos of *Batman, Batman Returns* & *At the Earth's Core* to: Mr AR Hasley, Barking; Liam McGrath, Oldham; and G Seyfang, Diss.

IMPRACTICALLY LARGE SHOULDER PADS COMPO
Judge Anderson's first name is Cassandra. A set of four *Judge Dredd* graphic novels are on their way to: Rick Giddings, Kettering; Martin Cornish, HMS Montrose; Bernice Murphy, Newry; Stewart Crofts, Norfolk; and Darren Worthy, Chesterfield.

RESISTANCE IS FUTILE COMPO
The Enterprise first encountered the Borg in the episode "Q Who?" (stardate 42761.3) Sets of talking *Star Trek* figures are being lovingly packed in Jiffy bags and sent to: Kevin Burton, Redbridge; Paul Maloney, Mansfield; Matt Dodd, Saffron Walden; Mr A Lyons, Southsea; Nick Hann, Rugby; Mark Fagan, Runcorn; Paul White, Middx; Philip Loder, Lancs; Mr Clint Pitman, Bath; and Mrs P Collins, Wolverhampton.

Next Month

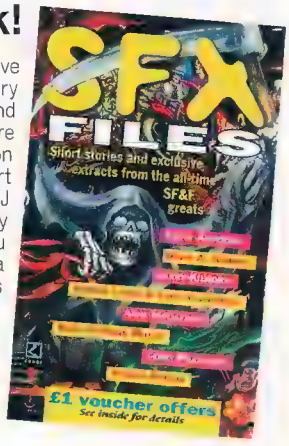
30 DAYS INTO THE FUTURE...

Coming next month in SFX

STAR TREK: VOYAGER

As the second season gets underway, we look at the show that everyone hopes will carry the *Star Trek* legacy into the new century. Next issue producer Jeri Taylor, make-up man Michael Westmore, production designer Richard James, plus stars like Tim Russ (Tuvok) and Roxann Biggs-Dawson (Torres) talk to SFX. If you love *Trek*, next issue is a must buy.

FREE BOOK!



Yes, we've done it again. Next issue we've got a *free* 200-page paperback for every reader, featuring novel extracts and short stories – some never before printed! – from a host of science fiction notables. With Terry Pratchett, Robert Rankin, Anne McCaffrey, Kevin J Anderson, David Gemmell, Garry Kilworth and others on board, you can't afford to miss it! (Oh yes – a certain Mr George Lucas makes a contribution too...)

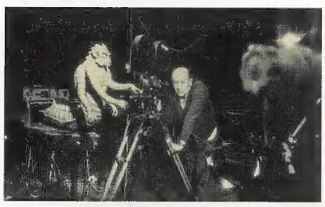
PLUS!

Terry Pratchett in The SFX Interview (it had to happen), Neal Stephenson, science fiction on the radio, and more...

SFX7: ON SALE TUESDAY 28 NOVEMBER. WATCH FOR IT!

CLASH OF THE TITANS

DIRECT FROM RAY HARRYHAUSEN'S PERSONAL PHOTO COLLECTION, THESE INCREDIBLY RARE PICTURES SHOW THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS STOP-MOTION ANIMATOR AT WORK ON HIS FINAL MOVIE...



When *Clash of the Titans* was released in 1981, it marked the end of an era... For over 30 years, Ray Harryhausen and producer Charles H Schneer had produced many highly successful adventure movies – often based on ancient myths and legends – which showcased the special effects technique known as stop-motion animation. Films like *Jason & the Argonauts, The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* and *One Million Years BC* brought monsters to life by moving scale 3D models a frame at a time, then inserting the animated segment into the live action footage.

All things have their natural lifespan, however, and by the early '80s newer, trendier effects were coming into fashion. Harryhausen retired, and with him the mythical cinematic epic all but disappeared from our screens. Despite some creaky moments – and primitive matte work – *Clash of the Titans* made a fitting film to exit on, boasting, as it did, some of Harryhausen's finest creations.

Top left: The Kraken wakes! Harryhausen brings his titanic sea monster to life using stop-motion. Forget computers; these sort of effects were created by painstakingly moving (and then shooting) the models frame by frame. Only a few seconds of footage would be shot per day, with something like the Kraken sequence in *Clash* – just over four minutes on-screen – taking weeks to animate.

Top left, below: Aaaaarrrghhhh! A horrible monster rises out of the sea to terrorise the city of Argos! (Actually, it's Ray showing off his model. Harryhausen handled all the effects for his films, and not just the animation.)

Above: Harryhausen discusses the finishing touches for the Medusa model with studio sculptor Janet Stevens. On the wall behind, you can see some of Harryhausen's own sketches for *Clash of the Titans'* two-headed dog, Dioskilos.

Left: Medusa as she appeared in the film.

STAR TREK The Next Generation – *The Episodes*

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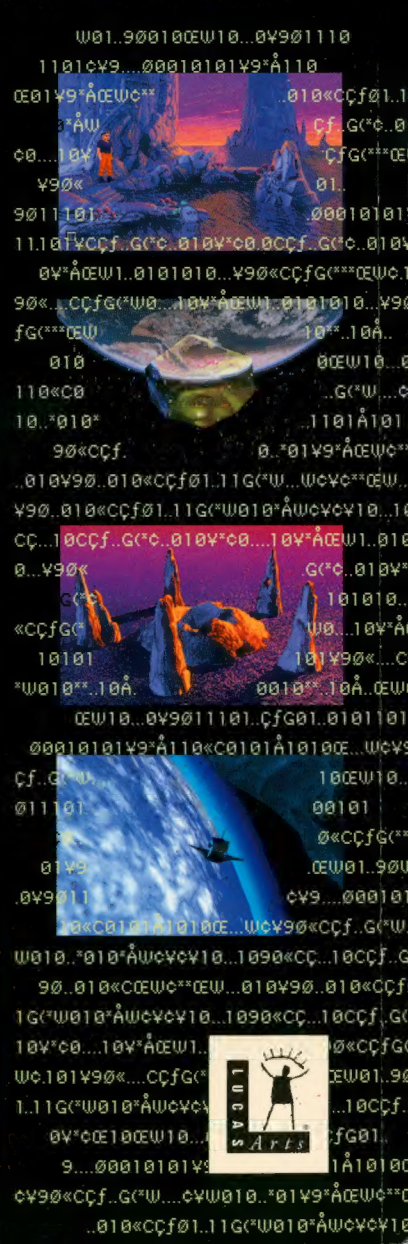

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